

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1098.—VOL. XLIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 17, 1884.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["I WAS ASKING ROSAMOND IF SHE HAD BEEN IN LOVE?" SAID AMY, LAUGHINGLY.]

ROSAMOND'S HUSBAND.

CHAPTER XV.

COLONEL BRAND, as well as all the magnates in the neighbourhood, called upon Lord Kingsford, and he duly returned their visits and announced that he had come to settle in the country for some time. His antecedents were wrapped in mystery; but when a man is rich, very rich, titled, young, and unmarried, people are not too searching in their inquiries. He was, as everyone could see, a perfect gentleman. He was clever and well educated, and he told someone quite casually (who told it to dozens of others), that he had been poor enough in his day; and his coming in for the property and title was a most unexpected piece of fortune. He further stated that he had spent some years abroad, and knew a little of the colonies, but queries, delicate hints or artistic feelers with regard to Lady Kingsford met with no response. The housekeeper, a plump, old lady, with a generous figure and a front, had told inquiring friends that she had never heard of

her. Tommy did not remember her, only an old woman, called "Mother Nan," and there was no picture of her anywhere, for between ourselves his lordship's dressing-room and writing table had been rigorously searched, and no photograph of any lady was to be found. He did not care for ladies, it was commonly reported, nor for the sex, young or old. He read, he rode about the farms, he shot, he fished, and he led a very quiet, domestic kind of life, with Tommy for his only companion. They looked an odd couple, Colonel Brand declared (having suddenly dropped in to lunch one wet afternoon) in that great pannelled dining-room, with three men in waiting—Lord Kingsford at the foot of the table, looking on and crumbling biscuits; whilst Tommy, in a high chair with a pinafore tacked well round him, was doing a great business with his pudding and a spoon, this being his dinner-hour.

"Must be lonely work for you," said Colonel Brand, gobbling down Mulliga'awny as he spoke. "First-class soup this, as good as I'd get in India. Wonder you don't marry again, eh?"

Lord Kingsford looked at his guest with a cool, measured glance that the latter did not relish, and felt that his host considered that he had been guilty of a liberty.

"You said that young Handcock had a couple of sound young horses, did you not?" was the only remark that he made, and Colonel Brand, glad to see that there was a loop-hole for other conversation, flung himself headlong into the question of young and likely hunters for the coming season, and discussed points and prices.

"I know a good deal about the matter, you see," he frankly stated; "for Rosamond, that's my step daughter, is a wonderful girl to ride to hounds, and of course I've to see she's always well mounted. Money no object" (rather ostentatiously).

"I suppose not," acquiesced his host, politely. "By Jove, no! that girl, my dear sir, has six thousand a-year of her own," helping himself to stewed oysters as he spoke. "Not bad for a single lady, eh?"

"No! not bad," replied the other abstractedly—he was repeating to himself as he glanced at Tommy, "six thousand a year, and

he grudged seven shillings a week for the support of her child."

"Yes! six thousand a year!" proceeded Colonel Brand, unctuously. "Of course she has had dozens and dozens of offers; Italian marquises, French dukes, English lords, and would not have anything to say to one of them; she's devilish hard to please. I'm always telling my wife she'll never marry. She's waiting for something like the man in the moon. She's not very strong, and if anything were to happen to her, of course it would be a great thing for the next heir—she not being married. You understand?"

"Of course," politely. "I understand perfectly," assented Colonel Brand's host, whilst Rosamond's next heir drummed away loudly on his empty plate with his empty spoon.

It cleared in the afternoon, and Colonel Brand (who never wanted anything for the asking), suggested that Lord Kingsford should drive him back to Violet Hill, and have a cup of tea, and chat with the girls. The matter was put before him in a way there was no getting out of, and he submitted to his fate, and was soon bowling along in a very high dog-cart with Colonel Brand, smoking one of his best cigars, in a state of beatitude beside him.

Here he was bringing home the great catch of the county in his train, in spite of the cool way he had received the little hint about a second wife.

As they turned in at the Avenue they overtook Rosamond, riding, and the trotting on the gravel behind him made her light-hearted thoroughbred plunge in a manner that would have unseated a less experienced rider; and yet, as Allan told himself, in those old days at Dredd, she had never even been on the back of a donkey!

However, she evidently had had it in her to be a most accomplished horsewoman. It was only last night, like a good many other things. She had already sprung to the ground when the dog-cart dashed up to the door, and she received them on the steps, looking charming in her well-fitting blue habit.

Beside her stood a big colly blue, no other than "Laddie." She had not got tired of him, thought Allan, which was strange; and, stranger still, Laddie knew him.

He accosted him with a loud bark, and sprang up on him with every appearance of delighted recognition.

"Down, Laddie! down!" cried Rosamond, raising her whip. "I never saw him do that to a stranger before. One would almost fancy that he knew you," laughing.

"Almost!" returned Allan, laconically, following her into the hall, and thence into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Brand and Amy were entertaining a roomful of company to five o'clock tea.

Lord Kingsford was received with effusion by the hostess, who made room for him on an ottoman opposite to her, and Rosamond found a low chair pushed forward for her use by a tall, fair young man, one of her avowed admirers.

There were half-a-dozen other people present, chatting in groups. A heavy-looking dowager shared the sofa with Mrs. Brand—a lady who lived on gossip—who was delighted to meet the new Lord Kingsford, and thirsting to question him about his wife.

"What a sweet little boy that is of yours! I saw him out on his pony yesterday," she said, when she had got an opening, in a high, ready voice. "I hope you have a satisfactory nurse?"

"Tolerably, I believe, thanks."

"Did you engage her yourself?"

"Yes," wondering what on earth she was driving at.

"Suppose she had first-rate discharges?"

"Yes, fairly good."

"Only fairly good?"

"Well, I suppose they were the usual thing."

"One cannot be too careful, especially a young man inexperienced like you, Lord Kings-

ford, in selecting a nurse for a motherless child," said the old lady, impressively.

"Yes, yes, of course, I know that; and I chose this woman for her face; that goes a long way with me."

An awful pause, and then Mrs. Brand said, indulgently,—

"I'm afraid it does with most young men, but," in answer to a violent nudge from her companion, "I think a pretty young girl is not suitable for—"

"Who said she was a pretty young girl?" interrupted Lord Kingsford, indignantly. "I'm sure I did not! She's as old as the hills, as old as you are, Mrs. Brand." (Mrs. Brand did not quite like this.) "You fancied that I was looking for a good-looking young woman! *Honi soit qui mal y pense.* I was thinking of an elderly person, with a good countenance, who would be likely to be kind to the little chap."

"It is very few fathers who make as much fuss about a child as you do, Lord Kingsford," said Mrs. Brand, soothingly; "and I'm sure it says a good deal for you. Another young man would pack the boy off to live in some family till he was old enough to go to school, and amuse himself about the world as a bachelor."

"Yes," returned Lord Kingsford, abstractedly.

"I suppose his mother died when he was born?" said the heavy old lady, in a low and semi-confidential tone of voice, looking at him sharply. "In such cases very often the child is greatly disliked. I know an instance in my own experience where the husband has never looked at the child to this day, and swears he never will. Your—I mean Lady Kingsford—died in the same way, I suppose?"

"No," hastily glancing at his wife, who, looking in the best of health and spirits, was gaily conversing with the fair young officer, brushing crumbs from her habit with her whip, and yet managing to take in the drift of the conversation between Lord Kingsford and two old ladies, "no, nothing of the kind; and, seeing they were both about to plunge at him open-mouthed with legions of commiserating questions, he added, very gravely, 'I never speak of my wife; it is a painful subject.'"

"Oh, of course, of course; we can understand that. What are you going to do now?"

Allan remarked to himself that he should rather think he was going; he was not inclined to allow himself to be cross-examined by these two old scandalmongers. Goodness knows what they would ask next; and, having promised to dine at "Violet Hill" on an early day, and taken leave of Amy and Rosamond, he got himself safely out of the room, and was soon bowling homewards.

"He has a look of Allan," said Rosamond to herself, as she divested herself of her riding-habit, and let down her long hair over her shoulders, and prepared for dinner. "Yes," speaking to herself in the glass, "it is a strange resemblance, but not so strong as it was the first day, I am thankful to say. That struck me in a manner that was quite painful, that absolutely haunted me. I wonder very much," addressing her reflection, as she slowly twisted up her great coils of golden brown hair, "I do wonder, and I'm not often inquisitive, what is the mystery about his wife?"

CHAPTER XVI.

The archery hall was a great feature in society in the neighbourhood of Armine Court.

There was not much archery, it is true, but old traditions were kept up, and this was quite one of the best, if not the best, county ball, and was always well attended.

People brought immense "house" parties from long distances—the band and supper came from London. It was held in the local town-hall, and no expense or trouble was ever spared to make it a thorough-going success.

Of course the Brand family went to it, and

so did Rosamond and Amy—Rosamond in clouds of pale blue tulle, over blue silk, caught up with pale pink roses—a French costume, the prettiest in the room, and probably the most costly.

"See what it is to be rich!" said Amy, with an envious sigh, as her friend came into the room just before they started. "What a perfect frock! The roses look like real roses, the body fits you like a glove, the shirt hangs just as it ought to—just clears the ground, and what sweet blue shoes and blue silk stockings!"

"You look just as well in your own way, Amy. That white dress of yours is very fresh and becoming."

"Yes, yes," discontentedly; "but it's not like yours."

No; no more than her face was like that of the beautiful wearer of the blue dress, who was to her as the sun is to the pale moon, and who eclipsed her little friend wherever she went.

"I do hope Lord Kingsford will be there," said Amy, as she fastened her gloves, "and ask me to dance."

"I suppose he will," said the other, coolly.

"But why are you so particularly anxious?"

"Oh," blushing, "I think he is so awfully nice; just the nearest thing I have ever met to my ideal," looking rather conscious.

"You have had so many bean ideals," said her friend, smiling; "at least six since I have known you."

"Well, at least you must admit that you have seldom met with any one as nice in every way as he is," with a pout. "He might even please you, who are so hard to satisfy—only," with a little malicious laugh, "for a wonder, he does not seem to like you. Most extraordinary, is it not?"

This same and very novel experience had occurred to Rosamond herself; so she merely coloured, and said nothing.

"Yes, my dear; I see you noticed it, too. It was so odd, the night he dined here he never spoke to you. I remarked it; and when you came near him he moved away. And yet, strange to say, I observed him watching you intently several times when you could not see him. Such a strange look! I could not understand it, and when you sang he sat in rather an out-of-the-way chair, with his back to the light, and you sang that song, 'Then you'll remember me.' I could feel somehow—I can't explain—that it affected him, not to tears, of course, but he looked as if his mind was very far away, and his thoughts were said I have a theory about him and you. Would you like to hear it? Quite a romantic theory, too!"

"I would like you to hurry, my good girl. What ages you have been with those twelve-button gloves! I call them a sinful waste of time."

"I think, Rosie, that you must be very like his wife that is dead, and that is the reason he always keeps away from you; and yet, in spite of himself, he cannot help looking at you, when he can do so unnoticed. What do you think?"

"Perhaps so," returned Rosamond, advancing to the cheval glass for a last fond look, and arranging her necklet.

"She must have been lovely if she was like you, Rosie," said Amy, contemplating her friend, gravely. "You are far the prettiest girl I ever saw; and you hold yourself so well and have such a pretty figure!"

"I feel quite set up in compliments for the whole night," returned Rosamond, laughing. "I know I am what is called 'fair to see,' but some way or other, strange as it may seem, I care very little for my pretty face. There was a time when it was different."

"And when was that?" inquired Amy, eagerly, for Rosamond, the most generous, and good-natured, and unselfish of girls, was very close about her own feelings and her own affairs.

"Never mind, dear," kissing her, "there's the carriage coming round on the gravel. We

must be off. You know how Colonel Brand goes on if the horses are kept waiting! A bear was a joke to him!"

In this instance the horses were not long detained, and soon the little quartette were stepping out at the town-hall, which was already crowded, and the band was playing the third dance as they entered the room.

Rosamond was speedily the centre of an eager knot of partners—would-be partners—and in a few moments her card was full, and two seconds later she was floating round the room to the "Officers' waltz."

She danced beautifully, as lightly as a feather, as gracefully as a professional; and Allan, who was leaning against a doorway, could not keep his eyes from following the blue dress dancing with the Hussar uniform.

Miss Glen, who passed beside him in a pouting condition, not being nearly as fleet of foot nor as long-winded as her friend, interrupted his gaze, and said,—

"Yes, I see you are admiring Rosie's dancing. Is it not quite a treat to see? She's never put out of step, and I believe is quite too perfect a partner."

"So I should imagine."

"Do you not dance yourself?" she asked, appealingly.

"I? No, only squares, for duty."

"Then why do you come to a ball?" smiling.

"To take old ladies down to supper, and make myself useful."

"I am sure that is very kind and considerate of you," said a familiar voice beside him.

Rosamond, who had paused for an instant in the neighbourhood, felt not a little piqued that this man, of all others, for whom she felt a kind of odd attraction, partly because of the strange look of Allan, should would her so pointedly, treat her so coolly, so almost rudely, she told herself, indignantly.

She was not used to such manners; she was accustomed to find all men her slaves, and she made up her mind that this mysterious young widower should not be the exception.

Later in the evening she was tired, and, excusing herself from dancing the Highland schottische, she and her partner stood round in a circle among the lookers-on.

Glancing behind her she saw a sofa in a niche, and on it, taking no apparent interest in the gay Scotch dance, Lord Kingsford.

He was sitting quite at his ease, leaning back against the couch, one leg crossed over the other, watching, not the dance, for the crowd was standing between him and it three or four deep—no, not troubling himself about the schottische, but watching her.

"What did he mean?" Acting on a sudden and wholly unaccountable impulse, she walked over, leaving her partner quite unconscious of her departure; and standing just before him said,—

"Tell me, Lord Kingsford, what you see in me that you have favoured me with so much attention. Do I remind you of any one?"

Lord Kingsford sprang to his feet at once, and, with a visible effort, tried to laugh off her question; but he failed to parry Rosamond's curiosity.

She was like somebody, for he looked quite pale and unusually agitated, as he endeavoured to evade her sallies.

"You do not deny that you take an interest in watching me?"

"Who would not?" he returned, with a deep bow.

"No, no! I don't want any compliments!" putting up her fan with an imperious gesture; "but I have noticed this, and so has Amy. I am very like somebody you know, or once knew, and my curiosity for once is insatiable. Who was she?"

"You can guess," returned Lord Kingsford, gravely, looking steadily at the beautiful, smiling face before him. "How like and yet how unlike the mild rose of Deyd Marbles! This was an exquisite hot-house flower!"

"I see, I understand. But then, why do you,

or is that the reason you always avoid me, and are sometimes downright rude?"

"I rude? Miss Dane," colouring. "I'm sorry you should think so. You are not in earnest."

"Of course I am," nodding her head with a smile of decision.

"I am exceedingly sorry. What can I do to—to—"

"Appease my suspicions," she suggested, with a smile. "Take me at once out of this broiling room, and get me a strawberry ice!"

Two minutes later they had left the room, arm-in-arm, made their way through the crowd; and Rosamond, in a little palmy bower, was eating an ice, with Lord Kingsford in reluctant attendance.

"How stifling that room was! How relieved I am to get away!" she remarked, as she nibbled at a wafer.

"What will your partners say? You seemed to be engaged three deep all the evening?"

"Oh, I'm tired of dancing, and I am not going to trouble myself about them!" she returned, with perfect sang froid.

"Not even about the gallant Hussar with whom you danced three times?" in a tone of ironical incredulity.

"Not even about the gallant Hussar you mention, and one would think you were my chaperone, Lord Kingsford! You seem to have watched me pretty closely. All partners are the same to me," holding out her little spoon.

"If they dance well I look upon them all as so many dancing machines—that's all!"

"And those like me, who don't dance. What kind of machines do you call us?" pulling his moustaiche, reflectively.

"Talking machines!" she rejoined, promptly.

"And are there any *stirring* machines?" he inquired, significantly.

"I really cannot tell you! I know nothing about them!" she responded, resuming her gloves, with much deliberation.

"And never flirted in your life, I suppose?" sarcastically.

"No never!"

"Nor ever had a love affair or a lover?" with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I did not say that," she returned, as a wave of scarlet dyed her face and neck, and then as suddenly passed away. What was there in this man's face and manner that impelled her to him, to tell him things she did not want to reveal, to be quite frank and outspoken, in spite of herself.

"Ah! I see, you have had an experience?" he observed, dryly.

"Have. All people have—girls I mean—and I am twenty-two, getting quite old. You are not my father confessor, and I am not going to commit myself any further. It is time for you to tell me a few things about yourself now."

"What would you like to know? I am only too much honoured."

"Well, really, now you ask me, I can't exactly say. You do not like speaking of your wife?" glancing at him interrogatingly.

"No," in a very unpromising tone.

"But I am like her."

"Yes," becoming rather pale.

"How long was it ago?"

"Some years."

"I suppose she was quite young—a mere girl, poor thing?"

"Yes," without raising his eyes from the ground.

"And your little boy, you have him, though; and every one says you are a model father."

"Very kind of everyone," he returned, stiffly.

"How old is Tommy?"

"He was four his last birthday."

And her child, if it had lived, would have been the same age. It did not escape her companion that her lips trembled, her eyes filled with tears, and that she suddenly raised her fan before her face. But in another moment she was as gay and as smiling as ever, and, rising and picking up her bouquet, said, "I suppose I ought to go back. I've three part-

ners for the next waltz, and my card is in an awful muddle. Don't you ever dance?"

"Never, now," significantly.

"I suppose you did with her. I ought not to say these things to you, Lord Kingsford," she remarked, apologetically, as she felt his arm, on which her hand lay, give a little shake. "But I must tell you this; something I cannot account for makes me say these things, whether I will or not. Something made me come and speak to you to night. I feel as if you were not a stranger, and, besides all this, you have a look in your eyes of—of—somebody," in a faltering voice.

"Who was that?" he said, pausing abruptly in the passage leading to the ballroom, and speaking in an odd, abrupt voice.

"Somebody you have never heard of, will never see or hear of, nor shall I. Somebody," speaking in so low a tone that he could scarcely catch her next sentence, "somebody who ruined my life and broke my heart."

"Now, now, Miss Dane," said a cheery voice behind them, "Do you know that this is my dance, and that I've been all over the place hunting for you this half-hour? It's nearly done now," in an aggrieved tone; "however, we might get one turn."

So Rosamond was led away, and Lord Kingsford, as he leant in a doorway and watched her dancing, said to himself,—

"No wonder she feels as if she were not speaking to a stranger. No wonder she speaks frankly to me. Did she but know—and what was that she said, I could not catch it, something about somebody, and life, and heart. She sees a resemblance, so she has not quite forgotten me, not entirely expunged Allan Gordon from her mind, as she did poor Tommy! Heaven and earth! what would all the old gossips, aye, and young ones too, say if I were to announce that the pretty Miss Dane, the belle of the evening, the best dancer, the most popular girl in the room, is Tommy's mother!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ALLAN and Rosamond met one another frequently during the next month, either at tennis parties, dinner parties, on the roads, riding or driving, and every Sunday on the church steps, weather permitting.

The conversation at the dance had seemed to create a crisis in the relations of Rosamond and Lord Kingsford. She was becoming more and more conscious of the influence he exercised over her, and yet she somehow did not dare to analyse it. She was at a loss to discover the real reason of her increased interest in him; her mental attitude towards him amazed herself. She was astounded that she could again find interest in the coming and going, the words and looks, of any man, after her bitter experience; and yet here was the bare plain truth.

Strange to say, the attraction was not mutual; her new acquaintance never sought her society of his own accord. He might accidentally be thrown into her company, but that was another matter.

It was to little Amy Glen he paid the most attention, if he could be said to single out any lady in the neighbourhood, and Amy (who was a susceptible young person) was elated and enraptured by the fact beyond all bounds.

"I wonder very much," she remarked, rather curiously, one day, "what it is that Lord Kingsford sees in me? I'm not nearly as pretty as you are, Rose," she added, frankly, "and yet it is to me he always comes and talks, when you and I are cut together. Isn't it very odd?" she asked, eagerly.

Rosamond in her secret heart thought it was most unaccountable, and it was not the first nor the twentieth time she made the same mental remark; but the fact was patent, not merely to her own sensitive understanding, but to everyone, and Amy had every reason to boast, "that Lord Kingsford paid her more attention than any other girl in the county." Certainly, it was not of a very demonstrative

nature; it merely consisted in sitting beside her at dances, walking with her from church—and this not very often—but for a man like Lord Kingsford, everyone declared that "it meant a great deal!"

Amy's impressionable little heart was touched—very much touched, indeed—for about the tenth time, for she had a great capacity for falling in and out of love! Now, she assured herself, and Rosamond too, that she was really, really, in love at last, and that if Lord Kingsford did not care for her she would die of a broken heart. She was a girl whose emotions were entirely on the surface, and who delighted in analysing her feelings for her own satisfaction and for the benefit of her friend.

When she came to talk to her confidante at night over their hair-brushing operations—when they made long sessions in each other's rooms—she would say nearly every time the same thing.

"Tell me, Rosie, you who have had so much experience, do you think he cares for me? Do—do tell me what you think, and I will abide by it." You see Miss Amy had no reticence and no shyness.

"How can I answer such a question?" was the invariable answer. "He certainly seems to like talking to you, and that is a good sign," smiling; "and if he really does mean anything, and I hope he does for your sake"—this was really, sincerely said, and, considering all things, magnanimous—"you will be a very lucky girl!"

"I shall be Lady Kingsford!" returned Amy, exultantly, airing her shoes on the fender, and thinking with a quick accession of colour how delicious it would be to take the precedence of all the ladies in the neighbourhood.

"I wonder what his first wife was like?" she added, meditatively; "one cannot help feeling an interest in her, poor thing. She must have been quite young. I wonder how long she is dead?"

"I'm sure I don't know," returned Rosamond, indifferently. "Has he never spoken of her to you during all your interesting little-d-d-ds?"

"Never. Indeed, I remark he pointedly avoids the subject. I've thrown out two or three delicate little feelers in that direction, but they have all been withered up. He can be very reserved if he chooses, and is not prone to discuss his own affairs. Still I think he might say something about her—who she was—where she died, for we know absolutely nothing about her beyond that she was the child's mother," in an aggrieved tone of voice.

"Well," consolingly, "you know a man does not usually make love to his second wife by talking of the first," said Rosamond, looking at her friend with a smile; "and, by-the-bye, what does he generally talk to you about?"

"Oh! the weather."

"The weather!" in a voice of profound amazement.

"Yes; there's a good deal of that, and Tommy, and Tommy's pony, and now I come to think of it"—as if struck by a sudden bright idea—"he talks a good deal about you!"

"About me?" echoed Rosamond, pausing, brush in hand. "What do you mean. You are joking."

"I mean"—imperatively—"that he generally—yes," nodding her head with her eyes fixed meditatively on the fire, "yes, nearly always leads the subject round to you, and then leaves me to talk about you, just dropping a word or two to keep me going. You know he is not much of a talker himself, and I am," laughing.

"I wonder what possible interest he can find in talking about me?" says Rosamond, speculatively. "I think you must be romancing, my good girl," for this statement by no means tallied with her own experience. Gladly as she would have been friends with him, the attraction, as before stated, was not mutual. He avoided her whom all men coveted. He

was the exception that proved the rule, and she felt that this avoidance was not accidental, not imaginary, but quite real.

He evidently disliked her, but why? And why, again, did she repeatedly catch his eyes following her or fixed on her, and instantly withdrawn, as she danced, or sang, or sat at her work, or in her seat in church. "She reminded him of his wife, that was it. Her first surmise had been the correct one," she said to herself, as lifting up the poker she began to stir the fire.

"Has he ever said anything to you, Amy?" she asked, as she hammered the coals.

Amy, she hoped, had a happy future beginning to open for her. What a contrast to her own dark past—a past into which she shuddered to look; and if her help, her sympathy, her friendship, and her money could avail Amy, they were hers to command most abundantly.

"N—o," returned that young lady, reluctantly. "He has never said anything that you might not put up in the market-place, that's the worst of it. But he is so handsome and looks so nice. I think he looks as if he liked me, and once he said that Amy was a very pretty name."

"He did not ask if he might call you by it, did he?" questioned her friend, who was still harrying the unfortunate fire with very successful results.

"No," with a profound sigh; "I only wish he had, I should have been only too happy to say 'yes.'"

"What is his name—his Christian name," inquired Rosamond, abstractedly.

"Oh!"—rapturously—"such a pretty one, such a charming name, it just fits him. You must guess it. Let me see how clever you can be!"

"My dear child, what nonsense. How could I possibly guess his name unless I wanted to sit up all night, which I don't. What is it?"

"Well, since you won't guess I suppose I must tell you," said Amy, with a certain air of affectionate patronage, and as if conferring a favour of no small value. "His name is Allan."

Clang down fell the poker on the fender, making noise enough to wake the dead.

"Oh Rosie! Do take care," she exclaimed, pettishly. "You nearly took my toes off, and will have Wheeler rushing in to know what all the noise is about."

Rosie's hair fell over her face as she stooped in silence to pick up the offending fire iron, and she seemed rather a long time in finding it, and her face, instead of being red when she lifted it and tossed her hair back over her shoulders, was simply ashen-white, and her lips were livid.

"Isn't it a lovely name?" said Amy, ecstatically. "But goodness gracious!" gazing at her friend in astonishment, "What's the matter! You have not hurt yourself with the poker, have you?"

"No. How could I?" returned the other, in a strange, forced, would-be cheerful voice.

How could the world be so small, that this neighbour, this rich, reserved young lord possessed not only her betrayer's eyes—a resemblance to him at times that made her the sport of agonising and conflicting emotions—but his name as well!

"It's not a common name, is it?" demanded Amy. "That's the beauty of it. You never heard it before, did you?"

"Yes, I have heard it before," returned Rosamond's white lips, almost mechanically. "It's a name"—with a great gasp—"that I never wish to hear again. It is a name that I hate," fiercely rising as she spoke, and pushing back her chair. She then took a candle off the dressing-table; and without another word, without even the customary good-night kiss, she trailed out of the room in her long, white dressing-gown, leaving Amy sitting at the fire with her hands on her knees, her mouth half-open, gazing stupidly at the now shut door.

"What can there be in the name that makes her look like that?" she asked herself, anxiously.

"I never saw her so queer before. Louisa Brand hinted to me that she was a girl with a past, and I suppose a man of the name of Allan is mixed up in it. Well, any way, it's no affair of mine," murmured this unusually prudent young lady; "my own love affairs take up as much mind as I've got." But now she understood why Rosamond seemed so hard, so unsympathetic about some things, why she repulsed every eligible suitor, and why she was called the ice queen. "She looks like a girl who would take a love affair to heart, and never get over it," concluded Amy to herself.

She was very fond of Rosamond, and had every reason to be so; and, although she opened her mind so freely and so fully herself, she was aware that her friend's past was a sealed book to her—at any rate, any past that would throw light upon the magic name of "Allan."

Of course she knew of her girlhood at Drydd, of her years on the continent, of her wonderful social successes, of her large fortune, of her intense dislike to Teddy Brand, and, in but one degree milder, of Teddy's father, of the cool, unusual relations between her mother and herself. But she felt instinctively that there was yet a great deal in the background which she did not know, and probably would remain in ignorance of as long as she and Rosamond lived.

To follow Rosamond now, and leave Amy to her foolish dreams of rank and happiness, and not by any means the first of the kind that have taken hold upon her impressionable imagination, we find Rosamond pacing her room as she used to walk in moments—nay, in hours—of frenzy, in bygone days.

"Could he, oh! would he," she asked herself, in a choked whisper, "be a cousin, or some near relation of that other Allan, her perfidious lover, who had disappeared from her life five years ago? But Allan had no grand relations, he had never mentioned the name of 'Kingsford'; but then he had probably assumed a false name himself. The coincidence was extraordinary; the likeness, the Christian name, they might easily be cousins. This Lord Kingsford was ten years older than Allan (the sojourn on the island had aged him greatly, as has been pointed out before); but surely he would have heard of him, and somehow she would sound him in the most delicate, distant, and subtle manner, and without loss of time too. Supposing the Allan who had deserted her were to reappear and claim her now she was an heiress! But it was not likely; five years was a long time. He was just a handsome, worthless, young scamp, who had plucked the Rose of Drydd, and thrown it away to wither or die."

The next day, as the two girls were snipping off dead roses in the garden, with chamomile leather gloves on their hands, and shady hats on their heads, Amy, whose curiosity was a much more robust article than she imagined, suddenly straightened herself, flung a mass of dead roses into her basket, and with gaping scissors 'twixt finger and thumb, said, in a most matter-of-fact way,—

"I wonder, Rosamond, what that lover of yours was like?"

"My lover!" with a terrible start. "You must be mad!" rejoined her companion, from the other side of the rose tree. "What put it into your head that I ever had a lover? You are crazy about lovers!"

"I'm sure you had!" impressively, "because of last night; and I think, when I tell you everything," speaking in an aggrieved tone of voice, "you might tell me a little about him!"

"What has put this ridiculous idea into your head?" returned Rosamond, sheltering herself behind her namesake's. "Are not your own experiences more than enough for you?" with a would-be sprightly air.

"Do you want me to understand, Rosie, or to believe that (coming round the bush) a pretty girl like you has never been in love, or never had a lover? Of course you've had dozens, but it has been a one-sided affair! I

mean, was there not one of them all—was there not once some one you really cared about? Come, now, tell the truth. Oh, Lord Kingsford, what a start you gave me! I'd no idea you were behind me," turning round with flushed cheeks and a rather constrained laugh. "What a mercy it was," she said to herself, "that she had not been talking about him, for he must have heard every word she said the last two minutes."

"I'm just in time to hear you cross-examining Miss Dane," he said, with a smile. "I have been an unintentional eavesdropper," speaking with much more animation than usual.

"Yes, and she has not given me an answer yet," returned Amy, playfully; "as you have happened to hear so much you may as well hear that, too."

"I'm not quite sure that I understood the question," he returned, glancing from one girl to the other; from the smiling, saucy Amy to the pale but singularly beautiful Miss Dane, who, with averted eyes and unusually pale face, was still keeping on nipping off roses; but had any one been watching her trembling hands they would have noticed that, like Death the Reaper, she spared nothing. She cut off buds, half-blown and full-blown roses; aye, and leaves indiscriminately, and gathered them mechanically into her basket.

Amy had no reticence, and was not particularly refined either, so she gleefully said,—

"I was asking Rosamond if she had been in love. Of course you know that heaps of people have been in love with her!" laughing exultantly; "but the question is, has she ever cared for any one?"

"You can scarcely expect her to tell you that," said Lord Kingsford, firmly, glancing quickly over at Rosamond, who now looked paler than the white rose in her hand, and who had not opened her lips yet.

"No," she exclaimed, speaking at last in a low, hurried tone; "if I had anything to tell I should certainly keep it to myself instead of blazoning it out in the open air to you and Lord Kingsford, and probably three or four of the gardeners; and at any time and place it is not a subject for joking."

"But I was not joking!" returned Amy, pettishly.

"Then so much the worse," very shortly. "Here, if you like I'll carry in your basket, as I can't stand the sun any longer," reaching over and possessing herself of Amy's share of dead leaves; and thus, with a burden of roses on either arm, and without a parting look or sign to Lord Kingsford, Rosamond turned down a shady, gravelled walk, and left Amy and the new arrival alone.

"I can't think what's the matter with her to-day!" said Amy, piteously. "Girls generally don't mind talking of their love affairs with one another. If you had not come up I am sure I'd have heard who he was."

"I doubt it," returned her companion so decidedly and promptly that she started, and looked at him amazed; but he was looking just as usual, merely tracing something in the gravel with his cane.

"She is such an odd girl," pursued Amy, confidentially. "Although I tell her everything," spreading out her chamois leather hands, "and she is an awfully nice confidante, and takes an interest, a real interest, in everything, she never returns the compliment, and only speaks of things in a general way. Of course I've heard all about her life at Drydd."

"Indeed," acquiesced her companion, ironically, but the irony was completely thrown away in the present case.

"And about her going abroad, and all that? I've got an idea into my mind," impressively.

"And what is that?" said Lord Kingsford, scrutinizing her with cool intensity.

"That she has had some terrible love affair that has spoiled her life, and that has hardened her heart against all men for ever."

"And why should you fancy this?" again tracing in the gravel.

"Oh, for many reasons. She takes no real

interest in any man, she never has a good word for love or lovers! I got a clue to the matter last night, quite by chance," confidentially.

"A clue!" he exclaimed, with a slight start.

"Yes, I'm sure I know the man's Christian name. It was, funny enough, the same as yours—*Allan*. Yes," she chattered on, unconscious of her companion's visible agitation, "I happened to mention your name quite casually"—oh, fie! Amy, what a fib!—"and she dropped the poker from her hand with such a crash, and turned so very, very white, I thought she was going to faint."

"Yes. And you think you have a clue?" "I'm sure of it," decisively. "I asked her if she had ever known anyone of that name?"

"Yes," with a kind of restrained eagerness in his tone; "and what did she say?"

"Oh, she said she had known one Allan once, and that she hated him, and she said it so viciously you would be quite surprised!" added Amy, in a rather awestruck voice. "He must have treated her badly; what do you say?" picking off a rose as she spoke, and looking at him with a coquettish glance from under her eyelashes.

"I suppose she thinks so, at any rate," acquiesced Lord Kingsford, in a rather abstracted tone, "and that is much the same."

"Wasn't it funny his having the same name as yours?" she asked, vivaciously.

"Very funny, as you say," rather drily.

"I wonder where he is, and who he was?" she added, impulsively. "I wish I knew his other name, don't you? I love mysteries."

"No, I cannot say that I share your anxiety," responded her companion, rather coolly. "Why should we attempt to thrust ourselves into Miss Dane's private affairs?"

Then relenting, as he met Amy's startled and imploring eyes, he added, "Well, never mind, Miss Glen; you may be sure that it's a long lane that has no turning, and if you will only wait patiently, you'll find out this fellow's other name some day. And now, suppose you show me the model beehives you were talking about the last time I saw you? Tommy is so fond of honey that I must set up an apiary; for nothing else will stand his consumption of that article."

And even Amy could take his broad hint that he wished to turn the conversation—"but why?"

(To be continued.)

WHEN you see a counterfeit coin on the pavement always pick it up. You are liable to arrest if you try to pass it.

PUBLIC story-tellers still earn a good livelihood in Japan, notwithstanding the modern influences which sweep away many of the old customs of the Mikado's Empire. In Tokio alone 600 of these street improvisadores—"Koshakushi" and "Hanashika," as they are called—ply their trade, provided with a small table, a fan, and a paper-rapper to illustrate and emphasise the points of their tales, and are as ready to extemporise histories of modern events and celebrities as to relate ancient legends. Another Japanese amusement, wrestling, is rather going out of fashion; but some 465 wrestlers are still left in the capital.

A GHASTLY industry is practised by a Cincinnati firm—the manufacture of hangman's ropes. The makers, however, are very proud of their products, and recently wrote to an Arkansas sheriff to offer him "the best hangman's rope in the market. We have given long study to hanging," they continue, "regarding it as one of the finer arts of civilization. Your geographical location is favourable in this way, and we doubt not that you handle many fine specimens; therefore, to secure a certificate from you, we will let you have a lot of ropes with improved nooses at half price. A noted criminal recently made a speech in favour of our rope, in which he said—'My fellow citizens,—I would rather be hanged by such a rope as this than live!'"

ROSES.

—O—

White roses for my love, soft, creamy blooms,
That they may show the darkness of her hair;

Fair, odorous roses, dropping their perfumes,
Like incense on the air:

White, full-brown roses, no half-opened buds,
But petals hanging loose, their growth complete,

Ready to fall and shower their scented floods
In worship at her feet.

Red roses for my love, blush flowers that seek
To rival lips deep red as coral stain;

Bright, luscious roses, lending to the cheek
The colours robbed by pain;

Full, fragrant roses, opening leaf on leaf,
And each leaf heavy with Heaven-given breath—

How hard to look upon you with belief
That soon the end is death.

White roses for my love, an avalanche
Of purest blossoms for her coverlid;
Flower upon flower, and heart may never blanch.

E'en though its love be hid,
Small, opening buds, bound in a fragrant wreath,

A bridal garland for my darling's head
And so, close lips, and clench the teeth.

And leave to Heaven the dead.

H. D.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER LII.

RUSHED IN DEATH.

HUGH MACDONALD lay on the snow-white bed in his own room, more beautiful in the last sweet sleep of death than in the pride and rich vitality of his boyhood, with the smile that came from Heaven on his lips, and the lilies that had been gathered for Sibel's bridal strewn in profusion over his shroud. He had died the death that he had chosen, with her white arms round his neck, and her happiness secure in Dudley's hands, and he gave his thanks to Heaven with his last breath. Let no one grieve for him. As he had lived so he died, unselfish and true to the last—rejoicing in the happiness of others, and content to leave them in the enjoyment of each other's love. His own loving service was over; he had done what he could—no wonder that his end was peace.

Sibel had torn off her wedding finery and dressed herself in the simplest black dress she could find, her tears falling so fast, meanwhile, that she could scarcely see to fasten it. Then she made Phil bring her every flower he could find. He stole up and down stairs with a sorrow-stricken face, struggling to restrain his tears, but inclined to cry like a girl.

The two friends had been chums ever since their schooldays at Eton, and Hugh had been a most excellent substitute for a brother, although jealousies had arisen between them, and the one had often expressed hot disapproval of the other. Now these paltry strifes were forgotten, and the dead was only remembered as the staunchest and most generous of friends, as one who would "stick close as a brother," through good report and ill. Gently and reverently the cousins strewed the flowers till there was scarcely any space that was not covered with their exquisite blossoms; and Hugh Macdonald looked like some beautiful young bridegroom of old, when men thought it no shame to their manhood to deck themselves with flowers like their fairer sisters.

With a shiver Sibel's eye fell on the French marigold, and with hasty fingers she pulled it out of the wreath. Emblem of misfortune, it had already seen its course fulfilled.

"Sibel," said Phil, in a low awe-struck whisper; "he doesn't look as if he were sorry."

"He was glad to go—he told me so," with a sob in her throat. "Oh Phil! I wish I were with him!"

"Now that's wicked. You know why he went away—would you make it all for nothing?"

"No no, only I feel as if I should be glad now; and some day, perhaps, if I'm ever happy again, I shall be sorry!"

"Come now, I wouldn't think of that!"

"I think you ought to go," still in that low whisper which is always used in the presence of death—"you may be wanted."

Phil nodded. "Dear old fellow!" he murmured under his breath, as he bent over the bed and kissed the broad white forehead, just above the coal-black brows. Then he went softly out of the room, and down the stairs, across the silence of the hall and passages to the smoking-room, where Lord Windsor was waiting for him in doleful seclusion.

"That fellow gone yet?" pulling the cigar out of his mouth.

"No, I heard his voice in the study."

"Takes his time. Do you know if it weren't for the noise it would make," looking half-ashamed of himself, "I'd give any money to help him out with a kick."

"So would I, only it wouldn't be decent to have a row?"

"How is she?" after a pause, during which they had both been smoking energetically.

Phil shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, poor thing, she was awfully fond of him—not spoons exactly—but awfully fond. Have they told Wentworth?"

"No, he's not to be told for anything!"

"Seems to me we might be doing some good out there—nobody to see after him, feel so down in the mouth, can't keep idle."

"I never thought of it. Shall I go after Landon, and see what he says to it?"

"I'll come with you," throwing his cigar into the fire. "Feel such a fool in my Landon days," looking down ruefully at his cock coat, put on in honour of the wedding.

"We can't help it!"

"No no, of course not. Come along."

Poor Landon, who was utterly upset by the events of the morning, and had been severely taxed by the effort to bear a cheerful countenance before the invalid, glad to be released from his watch, admitted them into the sick-room, after many cautions. Dudley looked up into the Earl's face, with puzzled eyes. "You're not Phil Forrester?"

"No, here's Phil—I'm Windsor. I used to be your dog at Eton, and seen you scores of times since."

"Ah! yes, Phil, I wish you would send Hugh to me; I know he's come."

Phil turned away, but Lord Windsor said quickly: "What do you want him for?"

"I want him to tell me," his breath coming short, "about the wedding. Landon says, but I can't believe him—"

"Landon's right."

"She's not?" with an eager gasp.

"No, and she never will be!" answering on the strength of his own convictions.

"But I don't understand," with a bewildered look from one to the other.

"I'll tell you; and Phil sat down on the end of the bed, and proceeded to unfold the strange story by which he and Lord Windsor had kept the Rev. Theodore Shaw out of his own church. The story was told without any of Phil's accustomed fun and vivacity, and not a smile curved his lips, as he described how he was got up as a coachman, the original fly-driver being made helplessly drunk—how he took his place on the box, and as soon as Mr. Shaw was safe inside Timothy Brown's house, unharnessed the horse, and quietly rode away on its back. He had to change his things in a dreadful hurry, and get to the church as fast as he could, in order that his absence might not be noticed. "And then?" Dudley's eager eyes fixed on his face.

"Then Macdonald came with a man called Springfield," put in Lord Windsor, as Phil began to stammer, "and they are in the library now, having it out."

"What has Springfield got to do with it?" his anxiety conquering his weakness.

"He's got something against Lushington, and—"

The door opened, and in came Lord Wentworth white and worn, and looking inclined to drop.

Phil got off the bed and pushed a chair towards him. Windsor rose, and Dudley looked at his father, literally panting for breath.

Lord Wentworth sank into the chair, as if his strength were falling fast, but knowing that all were waiting for his news, he raised his head, and said very quietly "Major Lushington has gone, and will not trouble us again."

A light shot from the Earl's eyes, but tapping Phil on the shoulder he went softly out of the room, followed by the young subaltern.

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Dudley, as he raised himself on his elbow, and a fever flush dyed his cheeks. "This is Hugh's doing—I want to thank him too."

"Lie down, my dear fellow," said Lord Wentworth, tremblingly, "he can't come to you just yet."

The invalid's heavy head dropped back on his pillow, and a joyous smile played round his lips. "My own little Belle," he whispered, and his tired eyes closed in the sleep that comes from exhaustion.

Hugh Macdonald was laid in the vault of his ancestors, and a long train of those who had loved him followed him to his last resting-place. There was scarcely a dry eye, as the service was read by the same clergyman who had officiated at his father's funeral, and the coffin was so smothered in flowers that only the edges of the purple pall were visible.

There was one little wreath conspicuous amongst the rest, because the white roses of which it were formed were scarcely kept together by the wires. It had been sent by Rose Forrester from her sick bed, and her trembling fingers had scarcely been equal to the task; but Sibel would not allow anyone to touch it, for there was a pathos in its untidiness which went straight to her heart. Alas! for the love that may not even follow, but is left behind, in a lonely world. Lady Windsor came over to bear Sibel company on that melancholy day, and as she drew her tear-stained face down upon her shoulder, said gently: "Don't grieve for him, dear child, he would not have been happy here—you must know that."

"But he might have changed!"

"No, a Macdonald never changes. To love once with them is to love as long as life lasts. He wanted to die—you could see it in his face—and you shouldn't grudge him his peace."

That evening Dudley Wentworth said to his father, "Hugh is dead—I know it. Oh, Heaven! if I could only have seen him once again!" Then he lay quite still for a long time, the tears trickling down his wasted cheeks, and his thoughts going back to the days when they were as brothers.

Hugh had made a will without his guardian's knowledge before he started for Egypt, and left it in the charge of Mr. Compton, the family solicitor. As he was the last of his race he could follow his own wishes without restraint as to the disposition of his property; and, as usual, he had carefully considered the happiness of others. His own inclinations would have led him to bequeath everything he had to Sibel Fitzgerald, but he fancied that Dudley, being scrupulously sensitive as to his honour, would not have liked the idea of proposing to an heiress, after he had been so impoverished by the failure of the Saratoga mine. Therefore, after remembering some old pensioners at Bramble's Peak, London, his guardian's faithful valet, and Phil Forrester, one of his oldest friends, and sundry others, he left all the family jewels to Sibel Fitzgerald, as a slight token of gratitude for the happiness her friendship had given him; and all the rest of his property, whether landed or in the funds, to his friend and brother, Dudley

Wentworth, in the hope that he would now be able to re-enter in possession of Wentworth Chase.

CHAPTER LIII.

WELCOME HOME.

THE hearts of the tenants were glad when it was announced that Lord Wentworth was coming "to his own again;" and serious consultations were held as to the propriety of erecting triumphal arches across the road, and decking the trees of the avenue with bunting; but a hint was given them by Mr. Graham, the white-haired rector, who had been down to the Chestnuts to have a confidential talk with the Viscount, that festive demonstrations were to be dispensed with, although the usual dinners should be given, and everything done that would give pleasure either to young or old.

It was a lovely day in June, when crowds of people made their way along dusty roads to the station at Thornfield. There were all the farmers of the neighbourhood, most of them making a goodly show on their powerful-looking horses, their wives and daughters dressed in their best, the tenants just run up from the fields in their workday clothes, their "missuses," with their babies in their arms, and the rest of the family clinging to their skirts. General Forrester, with his eldest daughter and Phil, were on the platform, and Mr. Graham and his wife stood by their side. As the train rushed into the station the gentlemen took off their hats, the ladies waived their handkerchiefs, whilst from the crowd outside came such a burst of cheering as no one but a landlord who has been like a father to his people is likely to get in these days of independence.

It was a homely, hearty welcome that did Lord Wentworth's heart good to hear it. He shook hands heartily with his friends, and reminded them that they were all coming to dine with him; but it was his own people he was thinking of as he hurried through the station, and when their ruddy faces came round him, and their voices gave him another lusty cheer, the tears rushed into his eyes, and with a faltering voice, he faltered out a husky "Heaven bless them."

He handed Lady Windsor into the landau, then Mrs. Graham, and then got in himself, asking Mr. Graham to accompany them. Sibel came in the next with Dudley, Lord Windsor and Major Belfield, and the Forresters followed in their own carriage.

"Can't we call for Rose?" said Sibel, who they had distanced the crowd, and was driving down the old familiar road. "I feel as if she ought to be with us."

"Yes, why didn't she come to the station?" asked Dudley, with languid interest.

"Because she was not strong enough to bear so much fatigue, at least, so Judith says, and a happy smile played round her lips as she thought of her own meeting just now with her cousin. Judith had wreathed her face with smiles, but had shaken hands with Wentworth before she deigned to take notice of Sibel, whilst Phil had imprisoned both hands with such true, cousinly affection that she had nothing but a laughing nod to give Miss Forrester by the time she remembered her existence.

"There won't be much room for Mr. Forrester," remarked Major Belfield. "Do you think I had better get out and walk?"

"Oh, I can walk," said Lord Windsor, without showing the smallest inclination to budge. As they drew up to the gate of Coombe Lodge the General stopped to know what they wanted.

"Only your youngest daughter, General, we thought we had better kidnap her."

"I can bring her up with her mother later on."

"That won't satisfy Miss Fitzgerald, shaking his head. "She has never any fun in the future."

"Then you had better come in with us."

"Thanks, Major Belfield was going to ask for a life, and I wouldn't deprive him of the pleasure."

"What an ass you are!" muttered the Major, angrily. "I never could get on with that she-poker!" However, he was obliged reluctantly to give up his seat to his perfidious friend, and take another opposite to the stately Judith, whose temper by this time was roused to hidden fury. That Dudley, whom she had not seen for years, should greet her as coolly as if she were an acquaintance, and then should add insult to injury by refusing the first opportunity of a chat—this was more than mortal maid could stand! It was maddening enough to see Sibel looking so lovely in her cool white dress, trimmed with black bows, and black velvet hat, with the long white feather, and Dudley gazing at her with eyes that saw nothing else. Oh, why had she ever been sent away from Coombe Lodge, or treated in such a way as to excite Lord Wentworth's compassion? If it had not been for that, those two would never have been thrown together. And if she and Sibel had only been given equal chances, she, with her five feet seven inches of grace and dignity, could have easily out-rivalled an insignificant child of only five feet four. She fumed and fretted inwardly all the way up to the Chase, and the Major found Phil infinitely better company than his sister.

"I never was more pleased at anything in my life, than when I was told that the Wentworths were coming back to the old place," she said cheerily.

"I always knew the move was unnecessary—said so from the first." And the General pulled his tie straight.

"But I thought it was Macdonald's money?"

"That helped—of course that helped."

"I should think it did," cried Phil. "It really seemed as if the poor old fellow died on purpose to do good to others."

"What a horrid way of putting it!" said Judith, pettishly. "I am sure if I thought that I wouldn't touch a penny."

"Why not, Miss Forrester?" asked the Major, in surprise. "I always understood that Macdonald was in love with your cousin, but knowing that it was no use, broke his heart, and left his money to his rival."

Judith's cheeks flamed, but her tones were low. "The most absurd stories are always most easily credited. I suppose people concluded that because—because they lived under the same roof, they must have the same tastes."

"I think there must have been more than that to go upon, for Wentworth, you know, has been for ever so long in India. I was often down at the Court, so I heard all the gossip of the neighbourhood, and I can assure you, my first question, whenever I came back, was always, 'Well, who has carried off the beauty?' There was Windsor, but we thought he had tried his chance and failed—Macdonald, but he was considered too young."

"And what about Major Unshington?"

"Oh, we never thought that could come off—I knew him too well. Wentworth was called the dark horse, and if he came over I knew he would win."

Phil was enjoying his sister's discomfiture immensely, but the General's wrath waxed hot. "Bon my soul, you give my niece a pretty character! Do you mean to say that she was the talk of the smoking-room, playing fast-and-loose with all these men in turn?"

"Not for a moment!" in shocked surprise. "We all worshipped her most humbly at a distance. Nobody would have dared to say a word against Miss Fitzgerald. The whole county would have been made too hot to hold him."

"Humph, an arrant flirt. I always said she was."

"Some people can't help it," with an air of superior dignity, which sent Phil's blood up to fever heat; "but I dare say she will turn over

a new leaf some day, when she is a little older."

"We don't want a new leaf," said Phil, fiercely. "Belfield and I are quite content, aren't we?" with a nudge of his elbow to emphasize the assertion.

"I should be sorry to see her altered in any way," very decidedly.

"Unless I could multiply her, and get one all to myself."

"Phil, you have a greater capacity for talking nonsense than anyone else," said Judith, in a tone of suppressed exasperation. "Will you look out and see if Rose is in the Wentworths' carriage?"

"Yes," leaning over the side, till he was in imminent danger of losing his balance. "Dear little soul, she looks brighter than she has done for many a day!"

"She is sure to have a headache to-morrow!"

"Some things are worth it."

"Not a heavy dinner like we are to have to-night. Good-gracious, what a mob! I thought we had got rid of them all!"

The cheers of the school children burst forth as the carriages went up the avenue, and the farmers' troop of heavy cavalry, which had formed an escort to Lord Wentworth's landau, drew up on the gravel-sweep, on either side of the portico. All got out of the carriages, and stood in a group on the steps, whilst Lord Wentworth, with his white hair shining in the sun, thanked them in a few simple words, "for the excessive kindness of their welcome—a kindness that he would never forget."

"Give it 'im with a three times three!" cried Farmer Benson, his jolly red face glowing purple with enthusiasm, and his comrades and neighbours answered to his call with all the strength of their lungs, and the warmth of their honest English hearts. Beer and wine were sent out to them, and the healths of the old master and the young, were drunk with the most fervent of wishes for their happiness.

When dinner was over the evening was so warm that chairs were placed on the terrace, and coffee was brought out into the fresh, sweet air. Gradually the party broke up, and the young people scattered themselves about the gardens. Rose, looking as fragile as a snowdrop, was taken in charge by Lord Windsor, who promised her mother most solemnly that, under no circumstances, should she divest herself of a certain woollen shawl, which he had fetched from the house on purpose for her. Mrs. Forrester, as was her wont, grew anxious about her youngest-born as soon as she was out of her sight. Sibel good-naturedly volunteered to go and look for her, whereupon Dudley, to Judith's exceeding vexation, rose from his chair, with an air of affected indifference, and supposed he must help her.

Judith said quickly, "I think it is rather chilly," but he must have suddenly grown deaf, for he walked off, at an increased pace, instead of asking her to join him, and she was left behind to ponder over her wrongs, or talk to Major Belfield, who was thinking of someone else!

CHAPTER LXIV.

A DOUBLE BRIDAL.

Two people were standing in the furthest corner of the second terrace, half hidden in a bower of roses, watching the first rays of the moon steal in a silver path across the still waters of the lake. Dudley's heart was full of joy and thankfulness, as a lark's sweet song when he soars towards the gates of Heaven. He was once more in the home of his forefathers, with the people whom he had known from earliest boyhood in their quiet homes in the valley at his feet, and the girl whom he had loved, "through peril and pain," standing close beside him, her little hand nestled confidently in his.

"Darling, when is it to be?" his voice sink-

ing into the softest whisper, as his arm drew her closer to his heart.

One shy, upward glance, and then her sweet face was hidden on his breast. "Not yet," and she shook with fear and joy.

"I have waited with the patience of Job—I can't bear it any longer!" and his voice grew thick with passion. "All sorts of fears come over me—I must have you at once and for ever!"

Her heart throbbed fast with a delicious pain. But she could find no voice to speak.

"You must answer me, Belle, fancy if something happened and I lost you!"

Then she clung to him in a fright, and begged him to tell her if he felt ill.

"No, no, only I can't sleep at night for thinking of you. Darling, is it fair to torture me?"

"I am no afraid," her voice low and unsteady—"I have the thought of a wedding."

"There shall be no white satin, or anything of that kind. You shall come down just as you are—only come, that is all I ask of you!"

He raised her face gently, and put his lips to hers, whilst his own grew pale with excessive feeling. "Good Heaven! how I love you!" with a deep-drawn sigh, as he held her close to his throbbing heart.

There was silence in that quiet corner, for hearts speak loudest when tongues are dumb; but before they left it he had wrung from her a promise that they should be married towards the end of August. And he walked back to the group on the terraces with such an air of proud possession on his handsome face, that everyone knew that the day was settled. Mrs. Forrester gave an audible sigh to Judith's lost chances, and said, rather fretfully,—

"Where's Rose? I thought you had gone to look for her."

"I—I—quite forgot," stammered Sibel, with a vivid blush.

"Never mind," said Dudley, stealing Judith's shawl to wrap round her, as she sat down in a chair between Lord Wentworth and Lady Windsor. "I'll go and reconnoitre, but with the utmost caution."

The Countess took Sibel's hand in hers, and patted it affectionately, to show that although she was disappointed about her son, she could still rejoice in her joy. Sibel was too shy to look at anyone else, but sat quite still, with a smile of exquisite happiness hovering round her lips, and a tear gathering slowly under her long lashes. All her past and present seemed a dream. Could she be the same girl who had climbed out of her window by a ladder, and only been saved from running away by a chance meeting with Dudley Wentworth?—the same girl who stood in a church, not so very long ago, with another bridegroom at her side, and her boy-lover dying at her feet? She shivered, and Lord Wentworth immediately proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room. It angered Judith beyond measure to see what care they all took of her cousin; and getting up from her seat, she asked her mother if it weren't time to go.

"Yes, my dear!" said Mrs. Forrester, meekly; "but I must first say good-night to Rose."

"Good-night!" in angry surprise.

Lord Wentworth has kindly insisted that she should stay with Sibel for the next few days.

Judith bit her lip. Was she to be for ever put aside for her sister?

Meanwhile Lord Windsor and Rose were lingering a long time by the lake, the former having combated every proposition of returning to the house. Poor little Rose! High's death had given such a shock to her frail health that she had hovered for weeks between life and death. As soon as she could gather sufficient strength for the move she was taken to Brighton for change of air. There Lord Windsor had met them, after his second rejection by Sibel. Feeling angry with the self-satisfied crowds, who all looked so "detestably" prosperous and happy, he was

attracted by one sad, little face, which seemed to belong to a being as doleful as himself. Her timid bow gave him the necessary encouragement, and for the remainder of her stay he was her daily companion. He had been longing to see her ever since, but every invitation to Berkshire was declined for her by her mother, who was afraid of the sad associations connected with Thornfield. Now he was making the most of his opportunities; and Rose was seized with a violent desire to run away.

"I think I will go back now," she said, for the twentieth time, but he placed himself before her, and imprisoned her between the hanging boughs of a rose bush and the silvery water.

"One moment," he said, entreatingly, as he stretched his arm over her head and picked a pretty white rosebud. He put it into her hand, and his fingers closed tightly over hers. "I have given you a rose, and I want you to give one to me."

"Certainly," surprised at his earnestness, and she looked up at the boughs above her golden head.

"Not that sort of rose, but this," and very gently his arm stole round her waist.

"Lord Windsor!" stepping back in a fright. In another moment she would have been in the water, for her foot slipped over the edge, but his arm tightened its grasp and held her safe. She fluttered like a frightened bird, whilst he bent over her trying to soothe her. "Let me go," she gasped.

"Not till you have promised to be my wife."

"I can't—I can't. Oh, why do you ask me?"

"Because I couldn't help it. I love you; 'pon my soul I do!"—he put his hand on her curls as if calming an excited child, but she shook it off. "Look here, Rose, if you don't love me now, you shall soon, I promise you. You wouldn't like to break my heart when I've just saved you from tumbling into the water. There," drawing away his arm, because he saw that it troubled her, "I've only been holding up your shawl as your mother told me to. I'll do anything you like; I'll wait a week and ask you again. Wentworth has asked me to stay."

"And me, too," under her breath.

"Jove, that's splendid! I'll ask you every day of the week, so you must give in at last."

"Please take me back!"

He took her hands in his, and looked down at her troubled face.

"Rose, is there anyone else?"

Two tears rolled down her cheeks on to her soft, white neck.

"I know," he said, gently. "I was fond of him too."

The blue eyes looked up into his with a grateful glance, she was so glad that he understood. He took it as a sign of encouragement, and stooping very low kissed her little hands. "We will remember him together,"—then he gave her his arm, and they walked slowly through the moonlit gardens towards the peaceful realities of life.

"Lord Windsor," very timidly, when she was protected by the group in the distance, "I must tell you I never mean to marry."

"Of course not," soothingly; "but you can't be an old maid; and I must have a wife."

"But—"

"Yes! We won't settle the day till the end of the week,"—then quickening his pace. "Mrs. Forrester, behold your daughter as carefully beset as when she left you."

"Yes, but how could you be so long?" with gentle reproach.

"Long? Five minutes at the outside, and the whole of that time I had my eye on that shawl."

Dudley, who had returned at a safe distance from the missing couple, touched General Forrester on the shoulder.

"Shall you be at home at twelve o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Eh? What? Do you want to see me? Any time you like. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"No, nothing wrong," with a quiet smile, as he helped Judith into the carriage.

"It's such a long time since you've been to the Lodge, that you see papa is surprised," with a tender look up into his eyes.

"I shall come often enough after this," pressing her hand in the unwonted exuberance of his feelings.

A spasm of hope shot through her heart, for inveterate conceit had completely blinded her to the fatal truth.

"Never too often, be sure of that," with a strange softness in her usually metallic voice.

"Now that was thoroughly nice of her," thought Dudley to himself as he went back into the house. "I did her the injustice to think she would be spiteful."

The next morning he had an opportunity of seeing how really nice she could be under adverse circumstances, and the consequence was that as he turned his back on Coombe Lodge he thought that it would be rather a long time before he crossed its threshold again. The General seemed anxious to make all the amends he could for the past. Mrs. Forrester was meek and inoffensive as usual; but Judith was like a scowling Fury, although her tongue was tied by conventional good-breeding.

"Poor thing," thought Dudley, as he pulled his moustaches reflectively. "I verily believe she was fond of me, after all, and I never said thank you."

Lady Windsor soon after this announced her intention of giving up her residence at the Court, and said she would like to find a place, not too far off, where she could settle down quietly. Bramble's Peak would suit exactly as to distance, and she would love to live there on account of its past associations, if Dudley did not object to parting with it. Wentworth said if she wished to have it, nothing he should like better. Hugh had especially desired him to return to his own home; the two places were rather a drag on his resources, and he could not bear to part with Bramble's Peak except to one who had known the Macdonalds, and loved them.

The matter was arranged to the satisfaction of everyone; the old tenants gained a very kind mistress, and Hugh's grave was watched over, and tended by loving hands.

Lord Windsor gained his point by quiet persistence. He would not believe in Rose's gentle "no"; so, to avoid an awkwardness, she had to change it into "yes," and not even Dudley Wentworth looked prouder than he did, as he stood by the side of his golden-haired bride before the altar of Wentworth church. The two cousins were married on the same fifteenth of August, and both had pleaded for an absence of wedding finery and fuss; so neither wore white satin or lace veil, but each looked her prettiest in a chip bonnet decked with soft feathers and pearls, and a white muslin trimmed with lace.

Lord Wentworth looked so peacefully happy as he leant on his gold-headed stick, as if he were ready to stay with Simon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," and General Forrester had lost some of his sternness, as his eye travelled from the sweet face of his niece to the beloved features of his favourite daughter. Both were young and so fair, both had floated over the sea of sorrow to the shore of true happiness at last; each had won a husband, of whose love she might be proud.

Sibel was very pale, and so nervous that when a footstep came echoing up the aisle she shook from head to foot. Dudley, who was watching her intently, bent his head and whispered, "Only old Uperton!" and the service proceeded undisturbed by any interruption. The last words were said, and she rose from her knees with a sob of thankfulness in her throat.

Dudley lifted her veil, and kissed her before them all. "My own at last!" and his face was radiant. Lord Wentworth laid his trembling hand upon her shoulder, touched her forehead

with his lips, and looking from one to the other said, hoarsely, "Heaven bless you both!"

The story of Sibel Fitzgerald is ended, and we leave her on the threshold of a brighter, happier future, feeling sure that so long as Dudley Wentworth is by her side as a strong tower of defence, sorrow, if it must come, will lose its edge, and every joy have a double sweetness.

Judith Forrester became a sour old maid. She was once engaged to a baronet, but he was so much alarmed at a sudden outburst of temper that he offered to pay any amount of damages rather than keep his engagement. The damages were not accepted, but Miss Forrester, disgusted at the whole affair, retired into determined spinsterhood. Phil spent a good deal of time with "his sister, the Countess," and developed into an averagely steady young man. The shock of Hugh's death had sobered him, and till the last day of his life he emulated his example, by his devotion to Sibel, who he always declared had done her best to make a man of him.

[THE END.]

A LABOUR OF LOVE.

THE Comte de Chambord was always noted for kindness of heart, and never was embittered by the changed prospects of his life. At six years of age he was the little Duc de Bordeaux, grandson of Charles X., and the hopes and expectations of France were fixed upon him.

Like many other robust and easy-tempered children, he considered lessons a terrible hardship, and particularly disliked writing. His copy-books were blotted and scrawled over dreadfully, to his grandfather's great displeasure and despair of the unfortunate tutor whose task it was to teach him calligraphy. But the child was so merry, asked pardon in such engaging tones, and made such good resolutions for future copies that the writing-master could not look grave for long together, and perhaps his royal pupil took advantage of him.

One morning, however, the child's playfulness failed to rouse him from a settled melancholy; there were even tears in the old man's eyes; and, though the child asked over and over what ailed him, he could obtain no answer.

After lessons, however, a servant told the boy that his tutor was responsible for a debt of one thousand francs incurred by his son, and saw no means of obtaining the money. What the family were assembled at the noon breakfast the little duc said, in his most coaxing tones,—

"Grandfather, if I write well for a whole week, will you give me something?"

"Yes."

"Will you give me fifty louis?"

"That is a great deal of money. What will you do with it?"

"That is my secret," replied the child. "Do you promise?"

"Yes."

The next morning the boy sat with his copy-book at a window. The bird sang, the tame pigeons perched on the window-sill, merry children played under the trees; but for once he neither heard nor saw any of them, and actually accomplished a copy without a mistake or blot.

The tutor was astonished, and his amazement increased when his pupil's careful industry continued for a week. No sooner was the last page finished than he went to his grandfather with it, and soon returned, carrying in both hands the bag containing the fifty louis. His bright young face was suffused with blushes as he gave it to the tutor, saying,—

"Here are my wages. Please accept them. I only worked that I might give them to you."

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

CHAPTER X.

BEATRICE STUART had no idea that Mrs. Clifford was one of the best musical critics of the day; she had never heard it whispered that the doctor's pretty young wife had been the star of fashionable concerts before she came to make a happy home out of that quaint, red-brick house.

Bee's only feeling was that Dr. and Mrs. Clifford would sympathize with her; she felt instinctively that the blooming young matron would understand her dislike to teaching, that she and her husband would not preach long homilies on the subject of the dangers, snares and temptations of the musical profession.

So sitting down to the piano in her shabby dress, without a shadow of nervousness or fear, Bee warbled forth her song, and when it was ended the pink colour flushed up into her cheeks, as she waited for her friend's verdict.

But it did not come; they said nothing, absolutely nothing. Bee felt injured; if her singing was so very bad surely they might say so; it was cruel to keep her there in suspense.

The doctor stood leaning against the mantelpiece; his wife crossed the room, and put another song before Bee.

"Sing that, dear."

It was more difficult than the other, a passionate lament for a love that was dead and gone; but Bee sang it as though she were the character—as though she felt every word she uttered. Her clear, sweet voice rang out through the room, its deep tenderness, its liquid music touching Mrs. Clifford's heart.

She bent over the girl and kissed her.

"Bee, you need never teach again; you need not fear Mr. D'Arcy employing you in his business. You have a fortune in your voice."

"And you think people would care to hear me?"

"I think that in a few months half London will tell you by their presence they care very much indeed."

The doctor came up to them smiling.

"And so you are to be an artiste. Well, Beatrice, it might be a dangerous life for some girls, but I think you are safe."

"But I am not an artiste yet," said Bee, with a little sigh. "Do you think the manager of the Thespian would try me? You see, I must do something soon, so that I can leave Bilby-road before my mother and her husband come home."

"Where is your sister?"

Bee's eyes filled with tears as she narrated Nell's extraordinary silence.

"Mrs. Ward promised to write to Lady Daryl."

"Then you mustn't leave Mrs. Ward till the answer comes; but you know, Beatrice, she won't approve our scheme."

"Oh, no."

"You had better come and stay with us," said Mrs. Clifford, gently. "Pack up your things to-night, and come here to-morrow. You can give your lessons just as usual for a day or two; and I have a plan in my head which I think would be better than going to see the manager of the Thespian."

The Thespian was a local music-hall of very third-rate celebrity.

Bee's eyes sparkled.

"But shan't I be a great trouble to you?"

"Not a bit of it," said the Doctor.

"It is not many years ago that I was what you wish to be, Beatrice," said his wife. "I always feel an interest in anyone who means to be a singer."

Bee's landlady was mildly tearful over her departure.

"I am sure, miss, I don't know what I shall say to you ma."

"She won't care," retorted Bee, a little bitterly. "She's got Mr. D'Arcy; she won't want anyone else."

The woman shook her head sadly.

"She's got him right enough, and I'm thinking before long she'll wish she hadn't

he's a bad-tempered man, Miss Bee, if ever there was one."

But when the packing was finished, when everything was ready for her to leave the humble home, a strange regret seized Bee. She loved Nell better than anyone else in the world; in spite of Nell's coldness her heart yearned to her sister. What if Nell came back to Bilby-road seeking her and found her gone?

Something of this she whispered to the landlady; that astute female shook her head.

"She'll never come back, Miss Bee."

Comforting this.

"Why not?"

"He won't let her."

"Mr. D'Arcy! He couldn't help her coming to the door. She wouldn't know that mother was married, and I was gone."

"I don't mean him, Miss Bee."

Bee gasped,—

"Whom then?"

"Law, to think you never had a suspicion of it, nor Mrs. Stuart either. Why, Miss Helena had a young man."

If she had said Miss Helena had a young elephant Bee wouldn't have looked more astonished, and yet how much it explained. All that had been mysterious in Nell's conduct seemed plain enough to her little sister now.

"I see 'em more than once a sweetheating together in the dark evenings before Christmas," confided the landlady, with the loquacity of her class. "He was one of the finest young gentlemen you ever saw, and he seemed just wrapped up in your sister."

"Who was he?"

"How should I know that, Miss Bee? He was a real gentleman, anyhow, very different from the one your ma's married."

"But Nell went away," said the girl, wonderingly. "She went to Yorkshire, and she said she was glad to go. Why did she leave him?"

"Maybe they quarrelled, miss. Anyhow, if you don't hear from your sister depend upon it they've made it up and are married. You see, Miss Bee, Bilby-road's a nice place, very quiet, and respectable, but it's hardly the style Miss Helena's young man's been used to. Dear, dear! you could tell that just by looking at him."

It was not a pleasing idea that her sister had married a man too grand to be introduced to her family, but yet the story had a shade of reality about it, and some presentiment came to Bee that it was true.

"But if she should come back," persisted the girl, with a sob in her voice, "if she should come back some day, will you give her my dear love, and tell her I couldn't bear to stay here after mother married, but Dr. Clifford has my address?"

The landlady promised. Bee and her few possessions went out to the four-wheeled cab, and a few minutes later Nina Clifford had welcomed her visitor, and installed her in the bright, cheerful spare room which was one of the features of the red-brick house.

There was a grand discussion that evening over Bee's plans. The doctor drew up a kind of circular, stating that her mother's unexpected marriage had obliged her to leave the neighbourhood, and she must therefore resign her pupils. This was copied in Bee's stiff, school-girl hand, and sent to the parents and guardians of the children whose clumsy performances on the piano had so tortured Bee's musical ear. No copy was sent to Acacia House, for the doctor judged that Beatrice owed a personal explanation to one who had done so much for her sister as Mrs. Ward.

It was not a pleasant interview. It took place three days after Mrs. Stuart's wedding. Each morning Bee had tried to find an opportunity and failed, but on this occasion the principal herself waylaid her with an open letter in her hand.

"My dear, I have bad news for you."

But Bee had adopted the idea that Nell had left Yorkshire to be married, therefore she was not so very much overcome at

Lady Daryl's letter. It was very short, merely saying that Miss Stuart had left Alandyke unexpectedly in the end of March. She had neglected to leave her address, and so Lady Daryl had been powerless to send on the letters which had come for her. She now enclosed these to Mrs. Ward, hoping she would convey them to the young lady's family. She concluded with cordial expressions of good-will. Evidently she was not angry with her late governess.

"What on earth does it mean?" asked Mrs. Ward.

Bee's voice had a ring of hope.

"She will come back some day."

"But don't you see the impropriety of the course she has taken, the extreme recklessness?"

Bee shook her head.

"Nell was never improper. I'm afraid we are both great disappointments to you, Mrs. Ward."

"You have not disappointed me, Beatrice."

"But I shall do. I wanted to tell you I am going to give up teaching. I believe my voice will make my fortune, and so I am going to be a singer."

"Who has been perverting you?"

She was a liberal-minded woman enough, but she had an intense hatred of things theatrical. Music and singing were accomplishments in her idea when practised in the seclusion of home, but they became sins of awful blackness when performed in public for the delight of an audience who had paid their money for the right of listening to them.

"No one has perverted me. I am poor, and I have a voice; therefore I conclude Heaven meant me to use it for my support."

"Don't be profane."

"I'm not," said Bee, wearily; "at least I hope not."

"I didn't mean to shock you."

"I am deeply grieved."

"You weren't half so angry when you thought I had fallen in love with someone."

Mrs. Ward was silent for a full five minutes; then with tears in her eyes she offered Bee a home at Acacia House if she would give up her mad plan.

And Bee refused it.

"Don't think me ungrateful," she said, warmly; "but I hate teaching. I'm not like Nell. The very thought of doing nothing else from year to year almost kills me."

"I hope you will never do anything worse."

And so they parted. Mrs. Ward would not see the white hand Beatrice put out in farewell, would not allow her to give another lesson in her school, and told her frankly that from that moment all connection between them must cease.

She was a good woman, but a very prejudiced one. Her cold, practical remarks jarred on Bee.

"Don't be afraid," retorted the girl. "I shall never try to come here to contaminate your pupils. I shall be as dead to you and them as if the same world did not contain us both. If I were starving for want of a piece of bread I wouldn't take it from you after what you have said this evening."

But indignant though she was there was a pain at her heart. This quarrel with Mrs. Ward seemed to cut off a link with Nell, and when the doctor's wife greeted her young friend on her return she saw the traces of tears in the dark-blue eyes.

"Who has been vexing you, child?"

And Bee told her.

"I wonder good people are so ill-natured."

"It isn't true," pleaded Bee. "Dear Mrs. Clifford, tell me it isn't true that I am so wicked?"

"You are not wicked a bit, child. You wouldn't have been given a voice unless you were meant to use it. Now, if you were married, and your husband objected to your singing in public, things might be different."

"I shall never have a husband."

Mrs. Clifford looked at the beautiful face and differed from her decidedly.

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"When I was seventeen I said the same. I thought there was nothing in the world so sweet as liberty, but you see I had not seen Dr. Clifford then."

Bee smiled.

"But that's not my reason. I don't care for my liberty the least bit in the world, only—I think young men are so stupid."

"You ridiculous child."

"But it's true. I'm sure in books girls get full of worries and bothers directly they're engaged, and I don't like worry. I like to glide along life smoothly. I don't think it is in my nature to love anyone as enthusiastically as girls do who are engaged. I shouldn't mind being loved. I should like it very much if he wouldn't expect too much in return."

Nina Clifford marvelled. She knew a good deal of human nature, and she saw Beaumont just what she said. She would make a sweet, even-tempered wife, but she would never give her husband a passionate, romantic affection. Looking at her grace and beauty, her pretty ways and evident delicacy, it came into Mrs. Clifford's head that if ever girl were suited by character and disposition to become an old man's darling, that girl was Beatrice Stuart. Her heart would never oppose her judgment. She would have a bright and prosperous career just because her feelings seemed so certain never to carry her away by their impetuosity. But she never said a word of this.

"One of my cousins is coming to-night. He so seldom honours us that I want to make quite a fete in his honour. You must look your best, Bee."

Two bright pink spots came in Bee's cheeks, but she said nothing. She was thinking that the only party dress of any kind which she possessed was an old black grenadine, which had done duty at three Christmas dances at Acozia House. Mrs. Clifford would gladly have helped her, but the doctor's wife was small and petite. Any other dresses would have been too short for this young giantess. She could not offer the girl money, and so she was perforce obliged to leave her to her own resources in the matter of toilet; thankful she had not whispered that her cousin was the manager and director of a series of fashionable concerts, and that he had come down to Camberwell only because she had earnestly entreated him, at least, to hear Beatrice sing before he decided she was incapable of taking the place of one of his lady artists, just then laid aside by illness.

CHAPTER XI.

NINA CLIFFORD knew the world thoroughly, and she understood her cousin perfectly. The more she said of Bee the more exacting he would become. Therefore, when he arrived, she received him alone in the drawing-room, never even mentioning her protégée, but expressed the pleasure she and her husband felt at seeing him, just as though he had come from St. John's Wood to Camberwell solely and simply to enjoy their hospitality.

She had sung often for Cousin Dick in days gone-by, and he had rated her pretty soundly for deserting the concert stage; but they remained good friends, and perhaps Mr. Ainslie had kept single all these years because he had cared for Nina a little too much.

She received him in a pretty cream-coloured cashmere trimmed with rich ruby silk. She looked as fair and elegant as when she sang night after night to an enraptured audience, and nearly as young too. Mr. Ainslie surveyed her critically.

"I can't think how it is, you look just the same. Most women sink into dowdies directly they're married. You seem as natty as ever!"

She laughed. "Niel is rather fussy about my appearance. I think he hates dowdies as much as you do!"

"Sensible man! And now, Nina, what about your protégée? I daresay she thinks she's got a voice; but it's no joke to bring out

a debutante in the middle of the London season."

Nina stooped down to do something to her dress.

"I thought there could be no harm in your hearing her!" she said, quietly. "Of course we don't want you to run any risk on her account. If you really think she won't do any good as a singer, she might board in some respectable family and attend the Academy of Music!"

"That's expensive! I thought she was poor?"

"Awfully, but—" she hesitated, "we might be able to help her a little till she could stand alone. She really is very much to be pitied; her mother has just married again, and—"

"Distressed female, I see! But, Nina, remember, because a girl's unhappy and poor she's not bound to make a success on the stage. What's she like to look at? There's a great deal in that—first sight, you know!"

Poor Nina remembered her protégée's shabby dresses. She had never seen the black grenadine; but there was a certain French merino, very faded, very short, and very tight, which appeared to be Bee's most festive garb. If she came down in that, Cousin Dick's opinion of her looks would be sealed to a certainty.

"I don't think you will like her appearance, Dick; but I am sure that could be altered!"

She saw her husband's brow again coming up the drive, and with a word of apology went out to meet him. Mr. Ainslie leant back in his chair and groaned.

"There's nothing more trying than to have benevolent people for relations. Nina and her husband'll look on me as a monster of cruelty if I don't give this girl a chance. They forget that if she fails it's a dead loss to me, and that a young lady who attracts pity by looking meek and depressed isn't the kind of person to take with a fashionable audience."

The door opened, and a girl entered. For one moment Mr. Ainslie thought his cousin had been deceiving him—then he concluded this was not the protégée; but some other young lady staying in the house.

She was above the middle height; her tall supple figure was arrayed in soft black draperies; her bodice was cut square, and finished off with quillings of narrow black lace; her sleeves, trimmed with the same, ended at the elbow, and so broke the rigid, sombre hue. She had for sole ornaments a few large poppies in her breast and among the coils of her hair.

"Mrs. Clifford won't be long!" said Cousin Dick, finding himself obliged to play host, and thinking what a sensation the stranger's beauty would make in London—the firm white throat and lovely rounded arms looked so soft and snowy against their frame of black. "Pray sit down."

Bee obeyed; she felt very well satisfied with her efforts to do honour to Mrs. Clifford's guest. She had ruthlessly expended most of one of her few shillings in narrow lace at a penny's yard, and she had sacrificed a bunch of poppies gathered for her by the children in the most reckless fashion. Perhaps striking contrasts suited her. She had only spent eightpence-halfpenny and two hours in chopping and altering the grenadine, and now that faithful garment looked like another dress. Perhaps it was the long plain sleeves, the high choking neck, which had made it so hideous before. Bee actually felt well dressed; and with the satisfaction that consciousness gives every woman she was quite ready to entertain Mr. Ainslie.

He was a man rather more than forty. Quaint and sarcastic in manner, warm and tender in heart, he was always saying unkind things and doing kind ones. Nina Clifford had known what she was about when she tried to interest him in her protégée. If he once took to her, Bee's future might be considered safe.

"Staying here?" he asked Bee presently. "I hate Camberwell, but Clifford and his wife seem to have made a nice little place of this house."

Bee's eyes commended his taste.

"I never thought anywhere in Camberwell could be so nice. I used to hate it awfully."

"You knew it before then?"

"Oh! I've lived here for years and years!"

"And you're going away?"

"No," very gravely; "I don't quite know where I'm going next. It doesn't depend on me."

"I see."

"What?" asked Bee, laughing. "I can't think what you found to 'see' in my answer. Mr. Ainslie was not in the least aggrieved."

"Yes, you mean you're engaged to be married, and you don't know where you'll have to live."

"I don't know in the least where I'm going to live. But I'm not engaged to be married."

"He!"

At this juncture Dr. Clifford and his wife entered. They both had tact enough not to remark on the *de-a-die*, and dinner being announced, as Cousin Dick took Mrs. Clifford in he asked in an audible whisper:—

"Where's the protégée?"

"Coming." Which was true, since Bee was following them on her husband's arm.

Dinner was a great success; they talked of lots of different subjects. Now and then Mr. Ainslie looked round as though he imagined the protégée would appear with the fruit at the dessert. His host and hostess wondered at these extraordinary glances. They had no idea Dick ignored the fact that the girl in black grenadine and red poppies, to whom he was so very attentive, was no other than the much-depressed young woman he had abused.

The gentlemen did not linger over their wine. The dining-room and drawing-room were separated only by a partition not remarkable for its thickness; and through this presently across sounds which attracted Mr. Ainslie's eager attention.

"He listened in breathless silence."

"Nina is right," he said to the doctor, when the song was over; "that girl has a fortune in her voice. It is a pity she is so badly looking."

Dr. Clifford stared.

"I thought she was very pretty. Didn't you?"

"I haven't seen her."

"I beg your pardon! You sat next her all dinner time," observed his host.

"Do you mean that that was your protégée?"

"Certainly!"

"The girl in black and red?"

"Yes."

"With golden hair and a figure like a willow?"

"Yes. What makes you so surprised?"

"Your wife told me her appearance was against her. I always thought Nina spoke the truth! What on earth did she mean?"

"I can explain that. Beatrice Stuart is awfully poor, and just as proud as she is poor. Her dress and her general get-up have been a perpetual trouble to us; since we daren't offer to provide her with better ones, and they seemed to have been made in the days when she was much shorter. Nina wanted to prepare you for her shabby appearance."

"She isn't shabby!" indignantly. "She is beautiful!"

"That's it. My dear Ainslie, it should been plain we should have noticed that her dress was a sixpenny grenadine which had seen more wear than is often expected of its kind."

"You needn't abuse her because she's poor!"

"I don't want to abuse her!"

They went to the drawing-room, and Bee sang again and again. Mr. Ainslie chose the songs, putting them on the desk one after the other. He found fault with one of her shakes, and bluntly told her that she stooped; but Bee took all his fault-finding in good part, and really believed him to be a very well-meaning, elderly gentleman.

She little knew the influence he was to have over her life. A surprise was in store for her

as great and sudden as that he had already received.

"Well!" he cried, facing round on her, when Mrs. Clifford had insisted on the piano's being shut. "Well, Miss Stuart, when can you come to London? I can't wait long, you know. This is Thursday; suppose we fix Saturday?"

Poor Beatrice thought he was going mad. Mrs. Clifford came to the rescue.

"She doesn't understand, Dick. I don't believe she has the least idea."

Dick stared at her.

"Don't you know who I am?"

"Mr. Ainslie."

"Yes, but— Well, what did I come here for?"

"To see your cousin," much perplexed.

"Yes, but for something else. Nina invited me to hear you sing. There's a vacancy in my company of artists, and she thought you could fill it."

Bee's eyes danced!

"And could I?"

"I reckon so. Now, Miss Stuart, I'm the director of the Marlton popular concerts; what do you say to being my second soprano? I'll give you eight pounds a-week for the rest of the season, and take you in the provinces afterwards. Now, then, do you agree to those terms, eh?"

Bee gasped. The Marlton popular concerts were famous throughout the land, royally attended. It seemed too wonderful to be true, and eight pounds a-week! Why, it was more than five times the slender sum which constituted her mother's income.

"Do you really mean it?" she asked the magician, who had opened such a dazzling prospect to her wondering eyes.

"Mean it, of course I mean it; there's no reason why you shouldn't be earning double that next year if you make anything like this success I expect."

"I shall never be able to spend it all," gasped Bee. "Oh, how good you have been to me!" and she took Mrs. Clifford's hand affectionately. "It isn't a week yet since I came to you just as miserable as ever I could be, and now—"

"And now you have bright prospects," said Nina, kissing her. "Well, suppose you tell my cousin you accept this proposal?"

In a few simple, grateful words Bee did so. Dick Ainslie shook hands with her, and told her she had nothing to say thank you for.

"And now to business, Miss Stuart. Where shall you live? It must be in London somewhere for the next four months, you know?"

Bee looked troubled.

"Mr. D'Arcy's establishment is in the city," she said, with a little sigh. "Please, don't make me live anywhere near that."

They laughed at her; they really could not help it. They told her that having passed the age of sixteen she was free to choose her own life, and they did not think either Mr. D'Arcy or her mother would attempt to make her return to them.

"You could ensure against it still more if you liked," said the director, kindly; "there is nothing easier than to take another name."

"I'd rather not," the blue eyes filled with tears. "I should feel as if I was ashamed of my own name if I took another. Besides, there's my sister; it would be easier for her to find me if I was still Beatrice Stuart."

"Beatrice Stuart be it, then; and now, where will you live? Shall I send you a list of places to-morrow? I dare say Nina would go and look at them with you."

"Please!"

He sent the list, and Mrs. Clifford gave up a whole day to the search, but Bee was hard to please; she point-blank refused to board with anyone. She said if they were dull they would make her miserable; she also objected to all houses which contained young men, alleging that they were such horrors.

Mrs. Clifford found her a little hard to please; but at last they discovered two pretty rooms in a quiet house near the Edgeware-road, which a childless couple of decent edu-

cation wished to let. Bee was charmed with the old people; the terms were low, and the landlady had an intense admiration for music, so the practising would be no objection.

That very day Nina established her young friend at No. 44, Arnot-place, which was a paradise of elegance compared to Bilby-street; and then with rare tact she broke to Bee the fact that the black grenadine and poppies, becoming as it was, would not suit as her only festive attire. Bee protested and entreated, but the doctor's wife gained the day. Ten pounds were judiciously laid out in tasteful additions to Miss Stuart's wardrobe, and having achieved her point Nina went home, leaving a very happy, grateful girl in the pretty apartments.

But first Bee clung to her.

"You won't tell them?"

"Tell who, dear?"

"Mamma and Mr. D'Arcy. Oh, Mrs. Clifford, I think it would kill me if they came here. You won't give them my address?"

"Certainly not, be quite easy about that, Bee. The doctor says he must refuse your address to everyone, friend and foe alike, but that we can undertake to forward any letters; by that means you would not lose any chance that came of finding your sister."

Bee gave a little sigh.

"I don't feel as if I should ever see her again. Oh, Mrs. Clifford, I can't bear to think of Nell; I always seem to see her when I shut my eyes, lying white and cold and stiff."

"Don't, child," said her friend, kindly; "things may not be so bad as you fancy."

And then she said good-bye, and went home.

She found on her return to Chamberwell that Beatrice had not left her guardianship a day too soon. The servants told her that two people were waiting to see her on particular business. They had declined to give their names or to call again, and were still seated in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Clifford had a shrewd suspicion who they were. She removed her bonnet and jacket leisurely, and then went downstairs to receive her persistent visitors.

She had never seen Mrs. Stuart, and she looked in vain for any of her daughter's beauty in the fair, self-satisfied woman before her; but the man's dark, swarthy face and evil eyes were too like Bee's description for her to have any doubt that the D'Arcys were before her.

"I have come for my daughter," began the female visitor, speaking with a boldness evidently not her own; "and I hope you will give her up quietly to us, who are her legal guardians."

Nina looked searchingly at the speaker, as though doubtful of her identity.

"May I ask your name?"

The man interposed.

"Madam, we have no wish to blame you; your kindness has been imposed on, and you have become the dupe of an idle, deceitful girl. We quite acquit you of all blame."

"I am glad to hear it," said Nina, coldly; "perhaps you will add to my obligation by telling me the nature of your business. I have but just returned from London, and I am in a hurry."

Mr. D'Arcy dropped his politeness.

"There's no use calling things by their wrong names," he said, spitefully; "we've come for my wife's daughter, and we mean to have her."

"As she is not in this house I fail to see how your remaining here will avail you."

"She has been here, you can't deny that."

"I never deny the truth; I have had the pleasure to receive and entertain Miss Beatrice Stuart, but she left my house this morning."

"It's false!"

Nina moved towards the bell-rope, but the woman's voice stopped her. How it faltered. Had a week's experience of Mr. D'Arcy in the character of a husband really changed the complaining, exacting widow?

"I am sure you meant kindly, ma'am. I know your husband was very good to me years

ago when the children were ill; but you see, ma'am, Bee's place is at home."

"Did your husband think so, Mrs. D'Arcy, when he addressed a letter to her, warning her he meant her to support herself?"

"Charles did it for the best. Teaching's poorly paid at the best, Mrs. Clifford. In my husband's establishment the girl could have earned a mint of money."

"What is the nature of the establishment?"

She thought of Bee's suggestions of ice-creams and barrel organs, and wondered what the truth would turn out.

"I am actively engaged in the arts," said Mr. D'Arcy stiffly. "I do not perform myself, but I hold a responsible position in the great establishment of the Roaring Ram."

Nina Clifford's very heart sickened; she knew more of such things than Mr. D'Arcy had bargained for. The Roaring Ram was a music-hall of the lowest class near White-chapel. Its popularity might enable it to pay its stars a moderately fair salary; but, oh! the misery of those who were not stars! Oh! the degradation, the society, the influences to which an engagement there would have exposed a girl of Beatrice's youth and beauty!

Mr. D'Arcy fancied the lady overawed by his importance.

"Beatrice causing a little, not much; her voice wants training, but to oblige me I expect the manager of the Roaring Ram would have given her an immediate engagement."

Mrs. Clifford turned to the mother.

"And you approved of this?"

"Yes, Bee ought to do something for herself, she's a great girl now; my little income won't go far, and at seventeen Bee's old enough to shift for herself."

"She has shifted for herself," cried Mrs. Clifford, indignantly. "From this day forward you need trouble yourself no more about her."

"But we shall trouble," declared D'Arcy; "we mean to have her address."

"Not from me!"

They stood irresolute.

Nina rang the bell.

"The door for Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy," she said, quickly, to the servant who entered. "All fresh applications must be made to my husband by letter. I utterly decline to hold any communication with you again."

There was something in her calm dignity which silenced D'Arcy's bombastic threats, and his wife's complaints. They said no more until they were safely outside the red-brick house, when no doubt they abused Mrs. Clifford to their hearts' content.

"But it doesn't matter, deary," the blithe little woman told her husband at dinner. "Bee is safe and happy, and they can't do us any harm."

Nor could they. Poor Mrs. D'Arcy heard some bitter truths that night. She had not been married for herself, not even for her little bit of money, but for her child. Her persistent habit of speaking of Beatrice as less than her real age had made D'Arcy think that for some years she would be under his control, and he could reap a fortune from her voice. He had believed her friendless, and thought she would welcome with delight a change from the drudgery of teaching. The threatening tone of his letter had been adopted to enforce her submission. The threat of the "establishment" was used to impress her with a sense of his authority.

And it had all failed—he had overreached himself. The very way he had striven to subjugate her had made her escape. He knew quite well, since she was over sixteen, he could not compel her to return to her mother's custody.

He treated his wife to a few very bitter home truths that night, and the poor woman regretted her fatal visit to the theatre that March evening, almost as bitterly as Beatrice had done.

"After all," she said, stung to defend herself, "you married me, not Bee. You ought to be glad you haven't got to support her."



[BRATRIC L'ARRE HER TRUE VALUE.]

"She'd have supported us, with her voice. We should have lived like fighting cocks." Mrs. D'Arcy sighed. She had a liking for good things, and would quite have enjoyed to live like those pugilistic heroes for a little time.

"Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk," she observed, patiently. "There's the annuity which my pa, who was in the public line, settled on me. Nothing can take that from us."

"A fat lot that is—eighty pounds a-year."

Mrs. D'Arcy hinted his "responsible position in the establishment" must surely increase their income, but when she heard the said position was that of a billiard-marker her courage sank.

"What can we do?"

"Don't know," gloomily. "I wish I'd have cut off my right hand before I saddled myself with such a burden as a fretful, penniless wife."

Her tears were ready, but she drove them back by an effort.

"I'm sure in Italy you always seemed well off."

"I lived on your husband then. He was well off, and a precious simpleton."

Some forgotten tenderness in her nature rose in defence of her children's father—the husband who had married her from sincere love, and lost father, home, and fortune by the act.

"Don't talk against him, Charles—somehow I can't stand it. If he'd died at home in his bed it would have been different."

"Didn't he die at home in his bed?"

"No, he started on a long journey, and he never came back."

"But you heard of him? Surely at least some one wrote and told you of his death?" She hesitated.

"I never told any one—not even the girls."

"You will tell me."

She dared not disobey, and so she told him,

Perhaps it was a relief to pour out the story she had so long kept secret.

Within amonth of her husband's departure she received a letter in a quaint, crabbed hand saying that her husband, the writer's much-loved son, was dead. He—the writer—could never forgive her being the cause of his estrangement with his son, but as that son's widow he would not see her starve. He, therefore, enclosed a bank note for fifty pounds, and told her she would receive the same half yearly while he lived.

"And did you?"

"Yes, for five years, regular as the six months came round, a cheque would come. The children were young then, so I didn't tell them. I seemed to feel if I took the money I was bound to say nothing to anyone. I had ten cheques in all, and oh! the comfort they were to us."

"And then?"

"They stopped. I think the old gentleman must have died; his writing had changed very much in the five years."

"Where did he live?"

"I have no idea."

"But surely your husband—"

"My husband told me he had to choose between father, wealth and lands, and me. He chose me, and he never mentioned his father again, until one day when things were at the worst, he said he would go down to Yorkshire and see if, for his mother's sake, the old man would help us."

"Yorkshire! We might get a book of landed gentry, and look up the name of Stuart. If your father-in-law made no will your children would be his heirs, and bound, in common decency, to do something for their mother."

"But the name was *not* Stuart. We only went by that when we got poor, because he couldn't bear anyone to know his fortunes had sunk so low."

"What was the real name?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know!"

"I may have heard it, but I have forgotten. From the day I came out of church I was called Mrs. Stuart; in time I almost ceased to remember we had any other name. What does it matter?"

Charles D'Arcy decided that if ever woman were utterly devoid of reason and sense it was the wife he had sworn to love and cherish. Dark days were in store for the poor creature, since she had quite failed to bring him any of the prosperity for which he married her. No contrast could have been greater than that between him and her first husband. Never had she regretted her children's father so bitterly as now, when she wore another man's ring on her finger.

(To be continued.)

ORNAMENTED tambourines are the rage of the hour in Italy, and have quite superseded albums, scrapbooks, &c. They are far more elaborate than those now seen in London drawing-rooms, and while one is covered with autographs of celebrities, another is ornamented by sketches by some well-known artist or verses by a popular poet. Thus an autograph tambourine has been given to the Cassinella lottery by the American representative's wife, covered with the signatures of political, literary, and artistic Transatlantic notorieties.

ALWAYS CHEERFUL.—There are some folk who are out of sorts at every hand's turn for no legitimate reason—because the sun has gone under a cloud, because they slept badly or ate too heartily; but people of even temperament are the most companionable, because a companionable person makes the best of every situation. She is not fidgety or fussy, and her prejudices are not, as with some, her chief characteristics. When she arrives, she brings another atmosphere with her, and common things seen with her eyes, become beautiful.



["I CAN'T FORGIVE YOU, NELL. YOU'VE DONE YOUR BEST TO BLIGHT MY LIFE."]

NOVELLETTE.]

"THAT DREADFUL PERSON."

CHAPTER I.

A LARGE, imposing-looking house in one of those lovely Yorkshire watering places where the pure breezes of the German Ocean seem to bring new life to those who inhale them. At first sight the place looked the abode of wealthy people; the rooms were furnished with more than an attempt at comfort, and the servant who stood in the hall watching the retreating form of the postman was neatly dressed in a dark cashmere gown and coquettish little white cap.

But No. 5, the Crescent, was, in reality, a lodging house; those comfortable sitting-rooms were never inhabited by their real owner; that natty-looking housemaid would never have been engaged to attend on Mrs. Spriggins, the mistress of the dwelling, an untidy woman, who was fond of decking herself in cheap finery, in which she never seemed at home. It was September, and the season was almost over. Mrs. Spriggins's lodgers had moved only the day before, and though the rooms had duly been cleaned for their successors it was highly improbable whether those muchly-desired successors would make their appearance, and the worthy landlady's temper suffered accordingly.

She came into the hall in time to catch Sarah in her idle survey, and interrupted it harshly,—

"Do you think I pay you twelve pounds a-year to spend your time idling like this, you hussy?" began the irate employer.

"I was just coming in, and please, ma'am, here's a letter," producing a thick, cream-laid envelope she had been keeping in her hand.

Mrs. Spriggins gave one glance at the letter, and forgot Sarah's shortcomings. It proved to be from a certain baronet of ample means, who had spent a week at No. 5 the year

before. It announced his immediate arrival, attended by his valet, and bespoke drawing-room, dining-room, two bed-rooms, and dressing-room.

Mrs. Spriggins fairly beamed with delight; she despatched Sarah to the post-office to telegraph to the big man that all should be in readiness, and then she went downstairs and expected to find tea ready.

But the household staff was a small one. Sarah, the show member of the establishment, was out; the rough girl who did the dirty work would have been afraid to touch the cups and saucers for fear of breaking them; and the patient drudge, who never resented the exactions of her task mistress, who toiled as hard as Sarah and the rough girl combined, and received less wages than the former, had taken the junior members of the Spriggins's family for an airing on the sands.

Mrs. S. sat down and bewailed herself; she had hardly finished when the back door opened, and the patter of children's feet was heard.

"Miss Grey! Miss Grey! come here directly!"

There entered a girl who might have been twenty, but who looked younger—a slight, childlike-looking creature, with a wealth of soft brown hair, and large, soft gazelle-like eyes; she wore a plain holland dress and coarse straw hat, but it was impossible to mistake her for anything but what she was, an English gentlewoman, though she did fill the post of nursery governess and general drudge in Mrs. Spriggins's family at the humble remuneration of ten pounds a-year.

She bore the storm of reproach which greeted her with patient meekness, took off her things and got the tea, saw that the toast was crisp and brown, the water thoroughly boiling, and then, when at the sight of her refreshments Mrs. Spriggins grew more amiable, and related the wonderful news, the nursery governess managed to take an

interest in it, though she knew it meant harder work for her without any increase of remuneration.

Poor Violet! Until three years ago she had been reared in luxury; her father failed on her seventeenth birthday, and survived his ruin barely a month. A distant relation would have taken his daughter into her house as humble companion, but the girl's pride revolted; she preferred to earn her own living. At first she tried daily teaching, but it was too much like starvation, and so she had answered Mrs. Spriggins's advertisement, and come six months before as general factotum to No. 5, the Crescent.

Mrs. Spriggins did not mean to be unkind to her; she made her work hard, she scolded her perpetually, and generally blamed her for other people's mistakes, but she confided all her difficulties to her, and demanded a large amount of sympathy; and so, perhaps, Violet was really less lonely and neglected in her humble position than if she had been in a very grand establishment where the nursery was quite cut off from the rest of the house.

Violet sat up late, attending to a few last decorations, for there was no telling when the baronet might arrive. He was then at Scarborough, and from thence to Whitby is no terrible journey. Everything was made ready directly after breakfast, and as she sat in the downstairs room teaching the children, Miss Grey found time to wonder a little about the new comer.

Sir Douglas was about fifty, Mrs. Spriggins had told her, and a handsome man too; he had no wife or children: in fact, he did not seem to have any very near relations. He possessed a town house, a lovely estate in Surrey, a shooting-box in Scotland, and a liberal income.

"He's the richest gentleman I ever had," observed Mrs. Spriggins, "and generosity itself. He never haggles about the price of anything."

Sir Douglas did not arrive till five; there was a great ceremony about his late dinner, and Violet lost her interest in him. She had a girlish fancy a man who cared so much what he ate could not be very nice.

"It's all right," said Mrs. Spriggins the next morning, in a burst of congratulation. "Sir Douglas intends to stay a month; his man's been to order a piano, and a case of wine has come from London. It's quite a godsend getting him so late in the season." And as a sort of luxury on the strength of the godsend she went out to spend the day, taking the children. She gave Violet very particular instructions about the great man's meals, and then left the girl to her own devices.

Miss Grey thoroughly enjoyed being so left; she was fond of solitude; it rested her. She had begun to wonder why the baronet did not return to lunch, when Sarah called her, in a voice of alarm.

"He's just come in, Miss Grey," she began; "at least, his man's brought him. It seems he fell down as he was climbing that place in the cliff, and he's sprained his foot and broken one arm outright."

"A doctor ought to be sent for, Sarah."

"He's been to one," replied the headmaid.

"Oh, dear, yes, his man has seen to that. There's nothing dangerous the matter, only he can't move his arm or walk a step; he wants to see the missis directly after lunch. What am I to tell him?"

"You had better say she's out."

Sarah departed; she returned presently, the lanchon tray in her hand.

"You're to go up and speak to Sir Douglas, Miss Grey," she began, authoritatively.

"I can't," returned Violet, looking up from a rent in one of the children's dresses which she was diligently repairing. "I must get this done."

"Missis 'd rather the children went in rag than Sir Douglas go away," retorted Sarah. "He wants you to write some letters, I think. He was in a rare way when he heard the missis was out, and then I thought of you."

"I wish you hadn't," said the girl, wearily.

She rose and put down her work, pushed back her wavy hair from her forehead, and went upstairs to the drawing-room.

"Come in."

She opened the door and entered. Sir Douglas, who had expected Mrs. Spriggins's governess to be of the same type as herself, started at the sight of the little black-robed figure; she looked a child, and yet her face had a woman's sadness, and the sweet wistfulness of her smile told of sorrow borne for months.

"I am very sorry to trouble you," said the baronet, consciously, "but I really want a few letters written; my man is not a good scribe, and my accident prevents my using a pen."

She sat down and began to write at his dictation; her pen flew over this paper, and the notes were soon completed, then she rose to withdraw. Sir Douglas would gladly have detained her; he thought his room would miss something when she had left it, but Violet did not understand his attempts, and departed as soon as her task was accomplished.

"And she is Mrs. Spriggins's governess," he murmured. "I should like to know her history."

He did not see her again for days. His landlady was most assiduous in her attentions. She seemed to think no trouble too great, but she never mentioned her governess only once; when Sir Douglas was paying his weekly bill and the door stood open. The sounds of a sweet musical voice floated upwards from the lower regions, and he cried eagerly,

"Who is that?"

Mrs. Spriggins shut the door with a bang.

"It's the young person I have to take care of my little girls, Sir Douglas. I believe she would sing from morning till night if she was let. I am sure it's quite one person's work to remind her that everyone's not so fond of the sounds of her own voice as she is. I do hope she has not disturbed you, Sir Douglas?"

"She has given me the greatest pleasure I have had in Whitby." He glanced at the piano procured from the library, which had never been opened. "I wish she would come and sing to me."

Mrs. Spriggins had very little notion of society's codes. Miss Grey had undertaken to assist her generally; if one of her lodgers needed being sung to: that was quite in the bargain, and she assured Sir Douglas that the young person would be proud to be of any service to him.

She had a battle with Violet. Miss Grey at first point-blank refused. It was only when her employer represented Sir Douglas's lonely state, and how dull the long days must seem to him, that she consented.

She went up to the drawing-room that evening in the gloaming. Sir Douglas wished to ring for lights, but she shook her head.

"I should think of all my work if the gas were lighted; while it is blind man's holiday I don't feel so idle in neglecting it."

She went to the piano and sat down. First a few rich chords fell on Sir Douglas's ear; then there rose a fresh, sweet voice, full of sweetness and harmony, rich and clear. The baronet listened, enchanted. She sang "Sweethearts," "The Lost Chord," and many others. She forgot where she was. As her fingers touched the white keys she seemed walked back in fancy to the happy days when she lived at home as free from care or sorrow as the birds of the air.

Sir Douglas never interrupted her, only as the clock chimed the hour, and she rose, startled at the flight of time; he said, in his deep, musical voice,

"You have given me a great pleasure, Miss Grey. Music such as yours is a real treat."

After that it grew quite a custom that when the daylight faded Violet should go upstairs and sing to Sir Douglas Forbes. Mrs. Spriggins, charmed to have found so simple a plan for amusing her lodger, never raised an obstacle. Violet, in her innocence of the world's cruel gossip, thought of no harm; only James, the baronet's own man, saw clearly whither every thing was drifting.

It was plain as a pike staff, decided the astute valet when November had come, and still his master gave no sign of leaving Whitby. "Sir Douglas walks as well as ever, his arm as strong as can be; and yet he never talks of going. We're due" (James always used the pronoun "We" to designate his master and himself) "at the Countess of Langley's tomorrow, and I don't believe Sir Douglas ever thought of it. He's just gone and fallen head over ears with this young woman, and if the Captain don't come and put a stop to it he'll just go and make her Lady Forbes."

James had no objection to Miss Grey, only he was devoted to Captain Forbes, Sir Douglas's first cousin and heir-at-law. Left an orphan at ten years old, Denis had been adopted, so to speak, by the baronet, who was then far on the shady side of thirty. He had always been looked on as Sir Douglas's heir. He had nothing in the world but his pay and a liberal allowance from his cousin. He spent all his leisure time at Castle Forbes, and every servant there loved him. Poor James, thinking the matter over, determined to write to the young man, and give him a hint of the danger brewing in the north.

James was not an accomplished penman, nor was he skilled in the mysteries of composition. He devoted three evenings to the production of his letter, and even then it left much to be desired.

"5, The Crescent, Whitby."

"Honoured Sir,—"

"I take up my pen with much fear of disrespect to you, because I think you ought to know the master is not himself. We have been here two months. We were expected at Lady Langley's last week, but Sir Douglas won't hear of our going. There's a young lady here, sir, at least a person who takes care of the children, and she's always playing and

singing to my master; and I'm afraid, sir, if you don't come or write, or do something to save him, he'll just go and make her Lady Forbes, which would be a blow to many, above all to your humble servant. "JAMES CARRY."

The letter, sent off his mind, James felt better. He began to think he had written none to early. Sir Douglas had actually driven Miss Grey and the children out in his own barouche. The poor valet dreaded every day to hear things were come to a climax, and he could have jumped for joy when, the third evening after his letter had been posted there was a loud double knock at the door, just as Sir Douglas was sitting down to dinner. He felt certain it was Denis; and a moment later Sarah ushered the young soldier into his kinsman's presence.

Sir Douglas looked embarrassed, but he shook hands cordially enough.

"I didn't know you had leave of absence, Denis."

"Only a couple of days, sir. I began to fear your accident must have been worse than you admitted, when I heard you had disappointed Lady Langley, so I thought I would run down and see for myself."

Sir Douglas looked at him keenly.

"I never felt better in my life."

"I am delighted to hear it."

"If I choose to stay at the seaside until my strength is quite re-established I don't see that anyone has a right to complain."

Denis began to think that the warning sent him had been no idle one.

"No one has complained, I think, sir," he answered, coolly. "I couldn't imagine anyone staying at Whitby through November unless they really were too ill to go away, so I came to see how you were. I'm sorry if my visit is unwelcome, but that can soon be remedied."

"How touchy you are. You know I am always glad to see you, Denis."

They sat down, and dinner was proceeded with; but it was an uncomfortable meal. Sir Douglas was wondering how far his secret was safe, and Denis was trying to introduce the subject of Miss Grey.

"You must be awfully dull here."

"On the contrary. My time passes very agreeably."

Denis shrugged his shoulders.

"No society, no amusements!"

"I never cared for amusements."

"But you used to care for society?"

"I have all the society I need. I never spent two months more pleasantly."

"In fact, you are delighted with Whitby, and mean to desert Castle Forbes in its favour."

Dinner was over now. The two men were alone by the bright, wood fire.

"It is possible."

Denis felt baffled.

"Everyone is asking me what is become of you. When I say you are at Whitby they utterly refuse to believe me."

"Refer them to me. I never cared what people said of me, Denis."

"I think a man ought to care," said the young captain, gravely, "when he is the representative of a noble name—when you are the representative of a race like ours, you cannot wonder that people are curious as to your movements."

Sir Douglas looked him steadily in the face.

"Denis, what brought you here? You never told me an untruth in your life. You can't look into my face and say you came to Whitby only through anxiety for my health."

Denis threw down his cigar.

"I heard that you were going to forget the lessons you taught me, and yourself commit the faults against which you have learned me from boyhood."

Speak plainly!"

"They say you are to be married."

"Well?"

"And that your promised bride is a daughter of the people—a girl who acts as servant to your landlady."

"Anything else?"

"Surely that's enough?" The young man's face was full of angry passion. "We are one of the oldest families in England; there has never been a *mésalliance* amongst you."

"I wonder if you would be so anxious about the family honour if you were not my heir-at-law."

The speaker cut bitterly.

"Try me!" cried Denis, eagerly. "Find a bride in your own rank, and I would be the first to wish you joy. You have brought me up as your heir, but I would never throw that in your teeth if only you do not bring this disgrace upon our name."

"I am much obliged to you for your condescension. I never disgraced my name yet, and I am not likely to do so, seeing I honoured it before you were born."

"Then it is not true?" gasped Denis. "You are not engaged to that dreadful person?"

"I am not engaged to any woman; but I tell you, Denis, if I chose to marry I should do so despite your taunts or those of the world. I suppose you meant well in coming here to-night, but I tell you I can't see it so. You had better go back by the midnight train. I can't remember what you have said, and yet desire your company. I have changed my mind; I shall not stay here much longer; Christmas will find me at Castle Forbes."

Very much relieved at the implied promise that Miss Grey was to be forgotten, but a little pained at his cousin's cold treatment of himself, Captain Denis Forbes departed; and it in after years he always expressed himself strongly in disfavour of Whitby, it must be owned he had hardly pleasant recollections of that spot.

Far into the night Sir Douglas Forbes paced his room. His heir's visit had awoke him to the knowledge of his own secret. He stayed at Whitby simply and solely for Violet's sake. Despite the gulf between fifty-two and twenty, he loved her as devotedly and passionately as ever woman was loved; he could not bear to let her drift out of his life.

Thirty-two years before, women had loved men as much then as now. Violet was so fair and gentle, so tender and innocent. Where among the noble daughters of his titled friends could he find another creature so beautiful and good? As to Denis, the savings of many years would be ample to make that young officer a rich man. Even if children came to him and Violet he could provide for Denis liberally.

His resolve was taken; he would push his fate to the test, and risk everything. Violet Grey should be his wife, or he would never look upon her face again.

She came in, as usual, that afternoon in the gloaming. The firelight fell upon her soft hair, turning it to waves of gold. Sir Douglas closed the door, and put a chair for her very near his own.

"Do not play to-night, I want to talk to you!"

Violet went back in the chair; it had been an unusually busy day, and she was feeling tired and sad. It was a rest to come into this pleasant room, and forget her toil for a little.

"I am going away."

A strange sense of something lost, some pleasure gone from her life, came to the girl, but she hid it bravely.

"I thought you would soon be wanting to go home, as Christmas is so near. Mrs. Spriggins will be very sorry."

"And you?"

"I shall miss you dreadfully," without a shadow of consciousness or embarrassment; "you have been so kind to me."

"Violet!" said Sir Douglas, gently; "will you come with me, my darling? I ask of Heaven nothing better than to be kind to you always."

She looked amazed, he went on earnestly.

"I know that I am an old man compared to your bright youth, but I love you so, my darling. I believe I could make you happy if only you would let me try. They call me a harsh, austere man, but believe me, Violet, I would be all tenderness to you."

She blushed crimson.

"But I do not love you."

"Is there anyone else? Violet, be frank with me. Have I a rival?"

She shook her head.

"I like you better than anyone else in the world, but it is not love."

"It will ripen into love. I am content to wait."

"You don't understand!" said Violet, brokenly.

"You think love would be sure to come. I don't. I believe I am one of those women who go through the world without love, but I am not bad enough to take all and give nothing. Nor can I accept love, honour, rank, from you when I have not even a heart to offer in exchange!"

Sir Douglas stroked her fair hair caressingly.

"I love you so much that I would rather you come to me an unloving wife than lose you!"

"But—"

"But," he interrupted, "think of what it would cost me to go away and leave you here; to know that you were at the mercy of a woman like Mrs. Spriggins. Violet, have pity on me, ay, and, child, have pity on yourself. I may not be young or handsome, I may not have charms to win your heart; but surely, dear, you would be happier as my wife than as the drudge and dependent of such a woman."

Violet hesitated.

"Are you sure you wish it?" she asked, in a voice which trembled with its own emotion.

"I am sure it will gladden the evening of my life with sunshine! Violet, just put your hand in mine, and promise me to be my wife."

And she yielded. It was not the knowledge of his rank nor the amount of his wealth which tempted her. It was the feeling that he would shower love upon her—that her lonely life would be ended. Violet Grey would never have sold herself for gold. She promised to marry Sir Douglas Forbes because her whole heart pined for love, and she thought that in the grave, tender affection of this stern, reserved baronet, she should find the happiness which she craved. She put her little hand into the baronet's.

"If you will love me always?" she whispered, "and never be angry with me for my coldness, I will be your wife! Oh! Sir Douglas, be kind to me, for indeed, I have known little sorrow."

Sir Douglas's answer was to take her in his arms and strain her to his heart. He kissed her again and again, and though the red lips were not denied him, he knew there was no responsive pressure. He took a diamond from his finger and placed it on her hand.

"That must be the badge of your submission; until I can replace it with another! Violet, when will you let me change it for a plain gold one?"

She trembled.

"Don't ask me to wait long, sweet."

"Let it be as you will."

"Violet, shall I tell Mrs. Spriggins, or will you?"

But Violet preferred to leave the business to him. She escaped to her own room, and James was sent in search of the landlady. That astute woman was for once thoroughly startled. The lodger calmly gave her notice—which she had expected—and then informed her he was going to marry Violet Grey, which fairly amazed her. He handed her a cheque for a hundred pounds, and desired her to furnish his bride with everything she might require. He gave her a handsome present on her own account, and arranged with her that the wedding should be that day week.

It was a beautiful morning—one of those clear, frosty days which are not uncommon in December. The winter sunshine fell full on Violet's head, turning her hair to a golden glory as she knelt at the altar by Sir Douglas's side. It was a very quiet wedding, absolutely no spectators except Violet's late pupils and their mother. The bride wore a soft, white cashmere, trimmed with lace, a lace veil covered

her face. It was never raised during the ceremony, so the officiating clergyman—a stranger—newly come to Whitby, had no opportunity of studying the features of the new-made Lady Forbes.

CHAPTER II.

Captain Forbes went back to London very much out of humour with himself and the world in general. True his cousin had denied the fact of his engagement; but he had refused to admit that he would have deemed such a union in any way derogatory. He had promised to leave Whitby, and the young officer devoutly wished he would do so promptly. He should never feel his esteemed kinsman quite free from Miss Grey's toils until he saw him safely established at Castle Forbes.

"He doesn't bear malice," thought Denis, as two mornings after his return from Whitby he received the cheque for his quarter's allowance. "I must say Sir Douglas is a sensible cousin."

Captain Forbes was a general favourite in society. He went into the gay world a great deal. True, December is not the fashionable season for London; but there were a few families of his set left, and he contrived to make time pass very pleasantly until his Christmas leave of absence began, when he went down to spend a week at Langley Manor, the seat of that very Countess whose invitation Sir Douglas had so ruthlessly neglected.

Lord and Lady Langley received Captain Forbes with much *empressement*. It was a favourite wish of theirs that one of their daughters should be mistress of Castle Forbes. They had welcomed Sir Douglas very warmly, but he had never seemed to see how gladly they would have given him one of their children. Of late years they had bestowed their attention more upon his heir, who seemed much more amenable; for there was a certain Lady Helen for whom Denis entertained more than a *penchant*.

He went down to Langley in the best of spirits. The time of his arrival was known, and he had quite expected the carriages to meet him at the station, with perhaps his fair charmer inside it. He was disappointed. Lady Helen had not come; moreover, there was no vehicle at all from Langley Manor.

The station-master appealed to could offer no opinion. It was better not five miles to the Manor; if the gentleman liked to walk, the carrier's cart could take his luggage. But Denis rejected this haughtily; he elected to wait until a fly had been brought from the village, and in this somewhat antiquated vehicle he finally reached the Manor, very cross, very hurt, and altogether in a totally different frame of mind than that with which he had alighted so joyously on Langley platform.

He was shown at once to the drawing-room. Five o'clock tea was going on. The Countess received him prettily; he missed an amiable something from her manner, but he had no cause to complain of his reception. He looked round for Lady Helen, but found her occupied by a bald-headed banker. Denis hated the banker on the spot; he darted a glance at the bright blue eyes, but their owner discreetly dropped them.

It seemed to Denis, when in all the ceremonial of full evening dress he came back to the drawing-room, that no one seemed quite so glad to see him as he expected, and, cruelty of fate, instead of taking Lady Helen in to dinner, a total stranger was accorded him, while she followed on the banker's arm.

After the ladies had retired Denis forgot his snubs; the men treated him as usual, as a prime favourite; and Viscount Leigh, the Earl's eldest son, devoted himself specially to the young captain, specially apologizing for his not having been met.

"It was my fault in a measure, you know. I offered to drive Nell down in the dog-cart, and she kept me waiting full half-an-hour, then my mother came out and said it was too

could for her, and between the two they hindered me till it was too late."

"Leigh," and Denis lowered his voice, "I wish you'd tell me if I've offended your mother."

The young Viscount—he was little more than a boy, twenty at the most—crimsoned.

"I'm sure you're one of her favourites, Forbes."

"I used to think so, but she's awfully cold to night."

Lord Leigh shrugged his shoulders.

"That's always the way with women."

"But why should she snub me; I haven't done anything dreadful. Why, last time I was here, I always took Lady Helen into dinner, always."

"Dugdale's to take her now," returned the young Viscount, with unconscious satire; "I heard her ladyship arranging it."

Denis glanced at the banker's bald head opposite.

"But—"

"She's going to marry him," confided Lord Leigh, "it was settled last night."

Denis wished himself miles away.

"Settled!"

"He had wished it for weeks, I believe. Such things are not much in my line. I always thought Nell would marry you."

Denis did not say he thought so too; but his face expressed the sentiment.

"And it was an awful clapper on me when the news of your misfortunes came," went on the Viscount. "I am sure no one could bear it better than you do. You look as cool as a cucumber."

"For the simple reason I don't know of what my misfortunes consist."

"You don't know?"

"I haven't an idea."

"Goodness! Why it was in all the papers yesterday. Indeed, the bells rang for half the day over at the Castle."

Denis gasped. An awful suspicion came to him.

"What do you mean? For Heaven's sake, speak out."

"Sir Douglas was married three days ago."

"Married!"

"They say she was a nobody—a servant in the house where he was staying; but for all that he has married her; and her children will cut you out of Castle Forbes."

It was all clear to Denis. Now he knew why he had not been "met" at the station, why Lady Helen had been forced last night to accept the eldest suitor. It was plain to him now why the Langleys treated him so coldly; but instead of blaming them for their mean, sordid spirit, he put down his wrongs to the account of that dreadful person whom his cousin had been fool enough to marry. He considered that he had been treated shamefully, and he detested from the bottom of his heart the nameless upstart whom the world now called Lady Forbes.

Many men would have rushed away from the house, have made some hasty excuse and quitted Langley for ever, Denis did nothing of the kind; he meant to stay out the full term of his visit. His very pride forced him to show the Langleys that he was not ashamed of the poverty that had come to him. Perhaps the Countess repented a little of her worldliness when she noticed the young man's courage. Perhaps she regretted the harshness that had forced her favourite child to engage herself to a man more than thirty years her senior.

It came at last, the opportunity for which Denis had lingered—a clear, frosty morning, when the ice bore beautifully, and skating was the order of the day. Mr. Dugdale did not skate; indeed, he had very particular business to discuss with his father-in-law elect, so he could not escort Lady Helen to the lake. She went with her sisters and their guests, Denis Forbes among them, and somehow she and he became separated from the others, and were to all intent and purposes *à-tête*.

"Are you very angry with me?" Her voice was weak and tremulous. There was nothing of the heroine about Lady Helen.

"You have disappointed me cruelly."

"I could not help it, Denis."

"My darling," and the young soldier's tone was full of tenderness, "it is not too late. Only tell me you were forced into this engagement against your wishes, and I will find a way to free you from your bondage."

Lady Helen hesitated. Mr. Dugdale's diamonds were on her fingers. He was even now settling with her father the amount of pin-money to be allowed her. With Denis Forbes neither diamonds nor pin-money would be her portion, and the vain girl loved money.

"You never told me you loved me, Denis."

"But you knew it."

She clung to his arm.

"Fate has been very cruel to us."

"We can defy fate. I am not rich, but I can keep you in comfort. Nell, put your hand in mine, and promise to give up the world for my sake."

"I can't," with a sob. "You don't know how far things have gone. Why, my trousseau has been ordered from Paris."

"Bother your trousseau! I shouldn't mind if you hadn't one at all."

"But I should."

"Nell, do you mean to go on with it? To throw me over really?"

"I can't help it," she cried, with a little sob. "I cannot, really. You see now Sir Douglas has married that dreadful person we should be so horribly poor, Denis. We should not have a chance of Castle Forbes. We should just be paupers."

She had said enough. Denis released her hand.

"I shall never trouble you again, Lady Helen. You have made it quite clear to me that it was Castle Forbes you valued, and not my love. I cannot give you the one, so I will at least free you from the other. I resign you to Mr. Dugdale without one pang or envy."

He turned on his heel to leave her, but her voice recalled him.

"Say you forgive me, Denis."

"I don't—I can't forgive you, Nell. I don't believe I ever shall. You won my heart and tossed it from you, and I'm not a saint. I can't forget you've done your best to blight my life."

He walked home slowly. On the morrow his visit would expire; it was characteristic of the man's nature that he made no attempt to shorten his stay—that he bore that evening among the gay and frivolous society gathered at the Manor, that he laughed and talked and jested just as though that dull pain had not ragged at his heart; but on the morrow, when he took leave of the Earl and Countess, it was with the firm resolve never again to accept their hospitality.

He found letters awaiting him at his snug bachelor quarters. One of them was in Sir Douglas's writing and he gave the preference to that.

"I told you truly, Denis," wrote his cousin, "that I was engaged to no woman, but since your visit I have changed that and other things. I was married three days ago to Miss Grey, the young lady to whom, I believe, your remarks applied. I shall be glad to continue on friendly terms with you. Your allowance will be regularly paid, and your future interest secured, on one simple condition—that you show all fitting respect to my wife. A slight to Lady Forbes I will not suffer from you or any one."

Denis took up a pen and dashed off a few passionate lines in which he broke off all intercourse with the baronet, refused to accept anything at his hand, and desired henceforth they should be as strangers.

"When you are tired of your folly, when your eyes are opened to the real character of the adventuress you have married, you will find me a dutiful kinsman, until then adieu."

The letter was never answered. The new year found Captain Forbes practically a poor

man. An officer in an expensive regiment with no means except his pay, many a young man would have grown desperate. Denis did not; he was too proud. He took to literature to eke out his resources.

Magazine articles, short essays and reviews came quickly from his ready pen. No one imagined how he made his money, only people noticed, as time went on, Captain Forbes never appeared hard up or disturbed by creditors.

very few had followed the example of the Langleys. Denis found himself a welcome guest at most houses, only mothers ceased to offer him opportunities for flirtations with their daughters. In a word, he was popular as ever, but no longer desired as a son-in-law.

He waited with great curiosity for the debut of Lady Forbes. He was anxious to see the face for which his cousin had forgotten the family honour; but May and June passed without any talk of Sir Douglas's return to London.

"She must be a regular Hottentot, and he's ashamed of her," was the young man's conclusion. "I wonder if he's tired of his infatuation yet?"

He had no excuse for writing to inquire; all intercourse had ceased between the cousins. It was only from the fashionable papers he learned that Sir Douglas and Lady Forbes were at Baden, where they purposed to remain for the summer. A good many people shared Denis's curiosity; many questioned him as to the bride, but he always professed entire ignorance. He never admitted that he felt any interest in his cousin's wife.

Lady Helen was married at Easter. Denis accepted an invitation to the wedding, and never flinched as he heard its solemn service.

"I shall never marry now," he thought a little gravely, as he came away from the Langley Mansion after the wedding-breakfast.

"I don't envy Dugdale his bargain. She is utterly vain and heartless, but I don't think I am a man to love a second time."

He broke off his reverie. Before him stood a young girl, barely eighteen, as it seemed to him. She was dressed in elegant simplicity, but there was an expression of alarm upon her face which touched Denis to the heart.

"Can I be of any use to you? I fear you have lost your way."

The girl blushed.

"I was looking for Cambridge-street, but I cannot find it anywhere. It is a long time since I was here, and the place is so altered."

She wore a soft, grey costume of fine cashmere, her hat had a long ostrich plume, and her many-buttoned gloves fitted her small hands perfectly. Her face was a strange mixture of child and woman; there was a wistful sadness about her mouth which made Denis imagine she was older than she looked.

"Had you not better have a cab?"

She shook her head.

"I cannot take a cab there, I have only just got out of one. I fancied Cambridge-street was close by."

Denis made inquiries of a policeman, and then asked permission to escort her. He treated her with as much respect as though she had been a little wandering princess, but his manner showed her he was surprised at finding her in that part of London alone.

"I could not help it," she said, in reply to some remark of his; "my oldest friend lives there, and we are going away from England to-morrow for months. I couldn't leave without saying good-bye to her."

Denis found the house a small, shabby-looking place enough. He heard the little maid-of-all-work give a shriek of delight as she recognized the visitor, and then he strolled down the street, meaning to wait until the door reopened, when he would reconduct the girl to more aristocratic regions.

"It's not in my line," he thought, carelessly, "I who have lost all faith in women to constitute myself protector and guardian of this one, but something in her face haunts me. I can't think what her mother is about to let her go roaming the streets of London alone."

Quite half-an-hour of waiting, and then the door opened, and an elderly woman, worn and faded, yet with some pretensions to gentility, stood on the steps with Denis's heroine; he was so near that he could not help overhearing the last words.

"You will write to me, dear, and tell me you are happy?"

"I will write, Goody," answered the girl, gently, "but I don't know that I can tell you that; sometimes I think no one is quite happy in this world."

They kissed each other, and the door closed; another moment, and Denis was by the side of the slight, grey-robed figure.

"You will allow me to be your escort until you reach a more fashionable neighbourhood?"

"I need not trouble you. I only want to find a cab. I fear it is getting late."

He glanced at his watch.

"Just five."

"And we dine at six. Oh, if a cab would only come by."

"Don't be alarmed, we shall reach a cab-stand directly."

"Do you think I shall get back in half-an-hour?"

"I don't know where the 'back' is, but cabs go a very tolerable pace."

"We are staying at the Charing Cross Hotel."

"Then you need have no fears; fifteen minutes will land you there. You are not making any stay in London?"

"Oh, no, we are only passing through. We crossed from Calais last night, and we go on to Germany to-morrow."

"Are you fond of travelling?"

She shook her head.

"I used to think I should be, but I begin to long for home, we have been moving about so much in the last few months."

They had reached a cab-stand. Denis put her into a hansom, and stood hat uplifted till she was out of sight. It was not a very startling adventure, but he found it difficult to forget. All through the season, amid the brilliant scenes in which he mingled, the slight, grey-robed figure came back to his fancy. He wished he had asked her name; somehow, though he professed to have lost faith in all women he would have felt a strange confidence in the owner of those sweet brown eyes.

CHAPTER III.

SIR DOUGLAS and Lady Forbes did not quite follow the programme laid down for them in the fashionable paper. They spent their honeymoon in Devonshire, crossed to Calais in time to see Paris in all the glory of the new year, and then wandered throught the south of France at their own sweet will.

Before she had been married three months Violet knew her mistake. Sir Douglas idolized her. He would have grudged no expense to make her happy; but he was afflicted with a fault which did fair to wreck their married life. He was intensely, passionately jealous.

He loved his wife, he grudged her every word, her every look. He was jealous of the people she spoke to, the books she read—even the pursuits that amused her. He wanted to be her all—her beginning and end.

Poor Violet, she tried to be grateful—tried hard to value the love he poured out on her, and the luxuries he showered at her feet; but many a time in those sweet spring days she was tempted to wish herself back at Whitby—Mrs. Spriggins's nursery governess. At least there her thoughts and feelings had been free. Sir Douglas seemed to consider even these as his property.

"We will spend this year abroad!" he told her; "then I will take you home to Castle Forbes, and you shall take your place among the great ladies of the county. Not one of them is so fair and graceful as my Violet."

"Captain Forbes lives there, doesn't he?"

"You need never trouble your head about him. Denis and I have quarrelled."

She hesitated.

"About me?"

"Something of the sort! Don't fret, Violet. Are you not better to me than the whole world? Don't you know I would give up home, friends and country for your sake?"

"I wonder why Captain Forbes dislikes me so?"

"Prejudice! Violet, I don't think I am sorry."

"Not sorry that your nearest kinsman detests the very sound of my name? Douglas, what can you mean?"

"It's only natural!" said the Baronet, wearily, "only you won't understand it."

"I can't understand it!"

"You are young and I am old! Denis is the most fascinating man I know. I shouldn't care for him to be at home in my house on intimate cousinly terms with my wife—my wife, who confesses she does not love me!"

Violet sighed.

"So we will be happy our own way," continued Sir Douglas, "and leave Master Denis to be happy in his! I like the lad well enough, but he has behaved abominably."

They went to Germany in April, to spend the summer months, and there they made the acquaintance of an American author of great talent, and manners polished by travelling in many lands. At first Sir Douglas took a great fancy to him. He was always inviting Mr. Fenwick to join them in drives or rides. Violet held herself rather aloof, she had married for peace sake; she must never show any interest in the friends Sir Douglas gathered round him. She on her side was much attracted by the author's niece, a pretty, stylish girl of seventeen, who was visiting Europe for the first time, and seemed to think no one in it so delightful as young Lady Forbes.

Violet hoped Mr. Fenwick's society might divert her husband from that excessive jealous devotion to herself, which was so perplexing. She really admired the author's character, and the quartet were on very happy terms, when an accident occurred which disturbed all their harmony, and brought home more fully to Violet's mind the mistake of her marriage. Stella Fenwick could not be expected always to confine herself to such staid companions as Lady Forbes and her elderly husband. She had become acquainted with some very objectionable English girls whose birth and position were the only unobjectionable things about them. In vain Mr. Fenwick remonstrated with her, he resolved at last to speak to Lady Forbes, and implore her to use her influence with his pretty, wayward niece.

He sought an interview when Sir Douglas was absent. Violet gave him her ready sympathy; she promised to do her utmost to prevail with Stella. Fenwick in a burst of gratitude, took her white hand and raised it to his lips. At that moment her husband entered. He made no scene, he addressed no complaint to the American; but the instant he had departed the torrent of his fury broke out. For one hour he stormed at the innocent wife who had never wronged him in thought or deed. Then he rang the bell and gave orders for an immediate return to England. Violet in vain defended herself. He was obdurate.

"My darling!" he cried, wildly, "I may have done you a wrong in marrying you, but at least I will protect you from even the shadow of evil. We will start to-night for Castle Forbes."

And he worked his way. Without a farewell word his poor wife was hurried to England as fast as train and steamer could take her, her only consolation that her written entreaties might be of more avail to save Stella than her spoken words.

No sooner had they left Baden than Sir Douglas's manner changed; he was again all tenderness. Violet did not deceive herself; she knew their married life would be one long, stormy period; she believed that her husband had given way to jealousy until it was beyond his power to struggle against it.

They reached Castle Forbes in July, when

the neighbourhood was deserted for a few days. They lived in perfect seclusion. Violet had full leisure to explore the beautiful old place which was to be her home.

"Can you be happy here?" Sir Douglas asked her.

"Yes; there is no place like England," replied his wife. "Douglas, don't let us travel about any more; with such a home as this we have nothing to gain by wandering."

"And Fenwick?"

Her soft eyes were raised to his face with an expression of keen reproach.

"Do you really doubt me, Douglas?"

"My darling, no. I know that you are the sweetest, best, and purest creature Heaven ever made, only I grow unreasonable when I think of the long years between us."

"Then don't think of them," returned his wife. "We might be so happy if only you would trust me, Douglas."

"I will trust you, my darling," and he meant to keep his word.

Alas for human resolutions. That very night Sir Douglas was taken ill. Messengers were sent in hot haste for the doctor; he never attempted consolation.

"There is heart disease of long standing," he told Lady Forbes. "Again and again I have told Sir Douglas excitement would be fatal."

He was looking at her intently. In common with the whole neighbourhood he had heard many strange reports of Sir Douglas's wife, but as he gazed on this sweet-faced girl in her soft white dress he thought that every one had been mistaken; he had never seen a truer face than hers.

She went back to the sick room, and knelt by her husband's bedside.

"Tell me all, Violet. Am I to leave you?"

"He says so. Oh, Douglas! I wish you could take me with you. The world will be very dreary to me without you, dear."

"Hush; you are so young, Violet; life still holds much for you. Forgive me, dear, that I have shadowed your life."

"You brightened it," she whispered.

"I am glad now you never loved me; it will make the future easier. Send for a lawyer," as a sudden thought struck him. "At least, I must right that money before I go."

She did not understand him, but she sent the message. Dr. Ward coming in a little later found Lady Forbes on her knees by the bedside, her husband's hand in hers.

"You will take care of her, Ward?" said the dying man. "She has been the truest, tenderest wife man ever had."

Dr. Ward touched the girl's drooping head.

"She shall have no truer friend than me."

"Is the lawyer here?"

"He is coming. Surely!"—as Sir Douglas's face contracted—"surely your affairs are in order?"

The baronet shook his head.

"No; but he will come in time. I could not die with the wrong unrighted."

But for once a deathbed utterance was mistaken! When some half-an-hour afterwards the lawyer reached Castle Forbes its master lay dead, and the fainting form of his widow had been carried to her own room.

The blow had been so sudden, so totally unexpected, that Violet was almost stunned by it. Fortunately there were others to take all need for thought or action off her hands.

Dr. Ward made all arrangements for the funeral; it was to be a strictly private one. The new baronet was then travelling on the Continent, so no summons could reach him; perhaps it was as well he should not meet the young girl who was to enjoy all the good things he had looked on as his inheritance.

Dr. Ward put but one construction upon poor Sir Douglas's dying words. He imagined the baronet would have recalled the will disinheriting Denis, and left his cousin some substantial token of good-will. He did not speak of it to Lady Forbes, she seemed too prostrated by grief. It was not until the day

before the funeral that he had any conversation with her at all.

"Of course you will go to your own friends for a little time," he said, kindly. "After tomorrow's sad ceremony this great house will be but a dreary place for a young creature like you."

"I have no friends."

"No friends!" aghast.

"I was an orphan when Sir Douglas married me. I have no friends who could receive me on a visit. They are not in a position to give hospitality."

"But, my dear young lady, that could be got over. You will be one of the wealthiest widows in England. The lawyer tells me Sir Douglas has left you everything he possessed. The new baronet is completely left out."

"Rather hard on him."

"Yes," with a sigh. "I have known Denis from a child. I can't help feeling sorry for him; but then your husband had a right to do what he would with his own."

There was a knock at the door, and the late baronet's valet appeared. James Carey had never been reconciled to his master's marriage. In spite of Lady Forbes's gentleness and amiability this servant had always detested her as an intruder and a usurper of the captain's rights. He came in now with a sinister smile on his face not good to see.

"I thought as you were here, sir," addressing himself to Dr. Ward, and scornfully ignoring his mistress, "I would make so bold as to give this to you now. It will be safer in your keeping, and will, doubtless, be required to-morrow."

Dr. Ward started. The paper James held out was a single sheet of foolscap of legal-like bearing.

"It is my master's will," declared the man, dauntlessly; "the last will he ever made."

Something in the servant's manner disgusted the old doctor. He pointed to the door.

"Leave the room."

When Carey had obeyed, the doctor turned to Violet.

"My dear Lady Forbes, were you aware that your husband had executed another will?"

She shook her head.

"I never understood business."

"But this business concerns yourself. It is dated the day of Sir Douglas's return to England last month, and is duly signed and witnessed. My dear young lady, I am afraid it is in every respect a perfectly legal will. This explains your poor husband's anxiety to see his lawyer."

"Why?"

Dr. Ward was a little annoyed with her indifference.

"Because this will, made evidently in a moment of intense irritation against you, leaves everything to Sir Denis."

Lady Forbes showed none of the agitation he had feared.

"I don't think I heard."

"My dear!"

"Riches don't make people happy," proceeded this extraordinary girl. "I am quite sure his wealth never made my husband contented."

The doctor put one hand on her shoulder, as her own father might have done.

"You don't understand, my child. This leaves you penniless, utterly unprovided for."

"I was penniless when I married Sir Douglas. I dare say you heard so."

"Yes. It is shameful. He ought to have provided for you in a fitting manner."

"What is the date of the will?"

He told her, and she understood all. Her eyes filled with tears.

"I tried hard to make him happy, Dr. Ward. I don't mind being poor; but I cannot bear people to say I married him for his money, and that he left it all away from me on purpose, because he thought so."

"He never thought so."

"But people—"

"My dear, you are not the first woman unjustly wronged by slanderous tongues. I know the truth. Whoever dares doubt Sir Douglas's love for you in my presence shall hear that he died with your name on his lips, his last words blessing you."

"Thank you!"

"I shall write to Sir Denis at once. You must stay here until I get his reply. He will be one of the richest commoners in England. No doubt he will be ready to make a fitting provision for his cousin's widow."

"I couldn't take it," said Violet, with a gasping cry. "He was cruel to me always in word and thought from the hour of my marriage."

"It is his duty to provide for you. Think of your husband's anxiety that the wrong he wrought you should be requited. For his sake don't refuse the generosity of his heir."

"I promise nothing," answered Violet. "I will wait until I hear what Sir Denis says; but, remember, I don't bind myself to accept his offers."

Dr. Ward wrote by that very night's post to the baronet. Allowing for the delays of forwarding his letter, he expected a reply in about five days. He made rather a mistake in his appeal. He showed his own confidence in Lady Forbes so strongly that Denis put him down as another of her victims, and entirely discredited his statement. Very, very sore was the soldier's heart against the dreadful person whom his cousin had married. True she had kept him out of his riches but a brief space; but no time could give him back the faith which had been shattered by the discovery of Lady Helen's worldliness, and no time would wipe away the blot on the Forbes escutcheon brought them by Sir Douglas's marriage.

"Provide for her!" cried Denis, dashing down the doctor's letter. "He must think me a saint to propose such a thing. If she were so utterly vile that poor Douglas's eyes were opened to his mistake in a few short months I'm sure she deserves nothing from me. Perhaps though," as he read the letter carefully through again, "for the sake of the family, I had better not drive her to desperate measures. She might drag our name through the mire in revenge. An allowance of thirty shillings a week will keep her respectably, in accordance with her original position. I'd better promise that."

When the ten-days widow received Dr. Ward, the morning on which Sir Denis's letter had reached him, she was almost frightened at the change in his face.

"I hope you are not ill," she said, gently, forgetting her own troubles in sympathy.

"I'm worse. I'm ashamed, disappointed, angry. Lady Forbes, I could hardly come here, I felt the disgrace of my mission so keenly."

Violet took his hand.

"I understand you have heard from Sir Denis Forbes, and he refuses to recognise that I have any claim on him. Well, I am not surprised. I have been very busy thinking over things since my husband was buried, and I am not afraid to face the world."

Dr. Ward looked at her in speechless admiration.

"I wish he could hear you. Perhaps he'd feel ashamed of himself then. I know I do, of the disgrace of being his spokesman."

"What does he say? Let me see his letter."

But this her champion refused. He fancied he could make Sir Denis Forbes's proposal seem less of an insult if he clothed it in his own words. Coughed anyhow, however, the bare fact remained—Sir Denis was willing to allow his kinsman's widow the magnificent sum of seventy-eight pounds per annum, paid weekly, on the condition that she dropped the name of Forbes, and never alluded to the connection with the late baronet.

Gentle as she was, Violet's eyes flamed as she gathered the import of Dr. Ward's speech. Before he had finished her answer was ready.

"Tell Sir Denis, please, that you appealed

to him to satisfy your own scruples; and that I desired and expected nothing at his hands. I will leave Castle Forbes this afternoon, and he will never hear again of my existence. I refuse his offers with the scorn they merit. It is more than likely I shall drop my husband's name, because a history such as mine would not aid me to gain my bread; but I utterly deny that I have ever done anything to make me unworthy of the title I took on my wedding day."

She put out her little hand, and the doctor gasped it.

"I was obliged to tell you," said the old man, sadly. "I hated doing it; but it was forced on me."

"I know."

"And you will really go?"

"This afternoon."

"And where?"

She shook her head.

"That is my secret. You had better not ask me any more. Sir Denis Forbes would not like you to show much interest in my movements; you know."

"Sir Denis Forbes has made me ashamed of him. My dear young lady, I am an old man, I have had daughters of my own and lost them. Won't you let me help you for their sakes?"

The tears stood in Violet's eyes.

"I have a scheme of my own, and if that succeeds I shall need help from no one. If you will promise never to betray me to Sir Denis I will write to you from time to time, just to let you know how it fares with your old friend's widow?"

"You have my promise."

"And if I am ever very poor, if everything looks black, and I sorely need a friend I am not so proud, Dr. Ward, but I would write to you and crave the help I have refused this morning."

With that he was more content. He shook hands, and called down Heaven's blessing on the slight, girlish-looking relative who was both wife and widow, and who, that afternoon, was to leave her husband's house penniless, alone, for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

Was left Denis Forbes spending his leisure in literary pursuits, and still a welcome guest in fashionable circles. His leave began early; and hearing that a series of papers on the towns on the Rhine would be welcome to his editor he started for Germany. He had not been there a month when the news came of his cousin's death.

"I should like to have seen him again," thought the young man, a little remorsefully.

"I'm sorry we parted bad friends. I don't suppose that dreadful person he married will ever have the civility to ask me to the funeral."

But the matter was not to be dismissed. Two letters reached him that same week, one from the lawyer, announcing that he was Sir Douglas's sole heir; the other from Dr. Ward, urging him to provide suitably for the widow. We know how he replied. He lingered in Germany until his papers were completed, and then went to London—made all the necessary preparations for leaving the army, and converting himself into a country gentleman. He tried hard not to think of Lady Forbes. He wondered much what she had said to his proposal, and whether the Castle was free from her; but hardly liked to put the questions.

"You will find great improvements at the Castle, Sir Denis," his lawyer told him, blandly. "Your cousin spent thousands on decorating it for his bride."

"Ah," Denis was uncomfortable; but he plucked bravely into the subject.

"I suppose you have seen Lady Forbes?"

The lawyer shook his head.

"I never had that pleasure. Her ladyship was hardly in England after the marriage—"

til that short stay at the Castle which ended so fatally."

"And is she there now?"

"Where, Sir Denis?"

"Castle Forbes. I don't want to urge any indecent haste in her departure; but, of course, a man likes to feel his house is his own."

"Of course; but Castle Forbes is quite at your disposal. The widow has been gone some time."

"Some time!"

"I believe she left two days after her husband's funeral. I understood Dr. Ward so, Sir Denis."

"And where has she gone?"

"I have no idea."

Sir Denis looked amazed.

"She must have left her address. I undertook to provide for her; and how is the income to be paid unless we know her whereabouts?"

"Doubtless, Dr. Ward knows where Lady Forbes is. I never thought of inquiring."

"Sir Denis went down to Castle Forbes that very evening. He had telegraphed to announce his arrival; and all the servants were gathered in the hall to do him honour. Mr. James Carey was conspicuous amongst them. He expected very handsome treatment from the new baronet in consideration of past services, particularly of that letter written from Whitby. Sir Denis hardly noticed him. The man was so mixed up in his mind with his last interview and quarrel with his cousin, that he would gladly have dismissed him on the spot. The housekeeper attended her new master to his rooms to receive his orders; but Sir Denis apparently had none to give. Mrs. Webb had been his own old nurse, and with the freedom of a valued retainer she broke the silence."

"We're right glad to welcome you home, Sir Denis. The Castle has been but a sad place this last year."

"Was my cousin's death sudden?"

"Fearfully sudden at the last, Sir Denis."

"I—I suppose his wife was with him."

"She never left him. He couldn't bear her out of his sight. He just worshipped the ground she trod on."

Denis sighed.

"At his time of life such infatuation seems madness. He had outgrown a young man's folly; but he was not quite in his second childhood."

Mrs. Webb felt embarrassed.

"My lady had a sweet face, Sir Denis. I never wondered at the marriage after I had once seen her."

"And they were happy?"

"Happy as the master had never looked before. The will came upon us like a thunder-clap; not but what it's good news to see the old place in the family still."

The next day was Sunday. Sir Denis went to church as usual, and waited in the porch to waylay the doctor.

"I thought you were going to out me, Ward."

The village surgeon looked annoyed.

"I've never been more annoyed in my life," he said, coldly, "than by your letter. I have known you from a child, and I didn't think such meanness was in you."

"Come, we are too old friends to quarrel. If you really insist on taking up Lady Forbes's cause as if it were your own, I don't mind increasing her allowance to any reasonable amount, for your sake."

"You can't."

Sir Denis stared.

"I don't think I should find any particular difficulty in the matter."

"She has gone away."

"But not beyond the powers of the post."

"It's no laughing matter, Sir Denis," cried the older man, haughtily. "You may think your riches all powerful; I can assure you they are not. You have achieved your will. The wife your cousin idolized—whom he blessed with his last breath—is a wanderer from any thing good and pleasant. Lady Forbes has gone out into the world to fight her own battles, and if she starves, or in her misery seeks a suicidal grave, it will be your doing."

"Nonsense," cried Denis, sharply. "She is no romantic, love-sick girl. She won't starve or yet drown herself. When she finds independence painful she'll appeal to you for the help she rejected."

"I would rather not discuss her," returned the Doctor, quietly. "I think you have wronged her cruelly. I believe if your cousin had lived an hour longer he would have altered that unjust will, but the law is in your favour."

"Do you want to quarrel with me, Ward?"

"I don't particularly mind."

But Sir Denis *did* mind. He had a very warm regard for the old doctor; and after a few more hot words they agreed that the subject of Lady Forbes should never be mentioned between them, and their old intimacy should continue.

The Langleys were at the Manor, and very warm was the invitation despatched to Sir Denis to join them there.

A certain Lady Florence, barely a year the senior of Mr. Dugdale's wife, was reported to be the image of her sister Helen, but Denis never journeyed to the Manor to judge of the truth of the report.

He bore the loss of Lady Helen Dugdale better than he had anticipated. He had not particularly admired her conduct that season, emancipated from maternal control, she seemed likely to be noted for her fastness, and if there was a thing Denis hated it was fastness, so perhaps he was resigned to the blow dealt out to him by fate last December.

He busied himself with his estates, took up all the duties of a country gentleman, and tried to believe he was happy.

There was an election for the county early the following year, and he came forward as a candidate.

He was returned at the head of the poll, and when he went up to London early in February it was with the right to place the magic letters "M.P." after his name.

But, in spite of his honours, in spite of the success which attended him and the popularity he enjoyed, there was a void in his life.

Sir Denis had loved Douglas Forbes almost as an elder brother; he had not got over missing him; he yearned for a real home, and began to falter in his denial of second love. Must his whole future be lonely because Lady Helen had been false?

So he went into society, and fulfilled its duties. He was introduced to every marriageable young lady of Belgrave, and tried hard to fix on one as the lasting ornament of his home. He admired some, he liked others; but he never found any particular fair face which lingered in his memory as the face of the young girl he had met by chance on the bright April day which witnessed Lady Helen's marriage.

It was April again now, and some strange impulse prompted him one afternoon to turn away from fashionable haunts to the quiet street whither he had escorted his grey-robed princess.

He did not know what he meant, what he hoped for by this resolution, only there had come on him a longing to see her face again—to hear her sweet voice.

She had spoken of spending the summer abroad; but now, twelve months later, surely she had returned! Perhaps that very afternoon she might be going to pay a visit to her humble friend.

He turned down the narrow street, which was almost deserted. He recognized the house at a glance, and noticed a card in the window of apartments to let. He was not in want of any apartments. He certainly had never dreamed of staying in that locality, but some uncontrollable impulse made him knock at the door.

The same little maid appeared. Yes, they had the rooms to let. She would call her mistress, if the gentleman would please sit down.

But Denis waited so long that he thought seriously of going away before the door opened, and the musical tone he remembered so well said, simply,—

"I am very sorry Mrs. Gordon is out, but I think I can give you any information you desire."

It was the face which had haunted him all these months, but, oh! how changed. She wore deep mourning now instead of her soft, grey draperies. The graceful figure looked slighter; the face more wistful than of yore. Denis could not understand it. She spoke as if she lived there. Well, it was a change after the Charing Cross Hotel.

He collected his thoughts and inquired the terms. He wondered if she remembered their meeting of a year ago. He fancied so by the heightened colour with which she answered him. Sir Denis asked a few questions, and promised to call again when Mrs. Gordon should be at home.

"I suppose it is a healthy neighbourhood?" he said, suddenly. "Do you live here?"

"Yes! I have lived here for several months."

He saw her lip tremble as she answered him.

"Forgive me, I did not mean to be inquisitive, but I have never forgotten our first meeting. I fear you have had heavy trouble since then. He looked at her crape-trimmed dress, and she understood the question he left unasked.

"Yes, I am quite alone in the world now," with a strange, sad smile; "and I have learned to know London thoroughly. I shouldn't trouble you now to find me Cambridge-street."

"It was no trouble."

He went away in a state of mingled surprise and dismay. He had found her, and she was of humble station. She was just as sweet and graceful as he remembered her, but she lived in a small lodging, and admitted she was alone in the world.

Sir Denis forgot how strongly he had remonstrated with his cousin on his infatuation. He forgot everything but that Miss Gordon's lodger moved his heart as Lady Helen had never done. He possessed a town mansion, luxurious chambers in Piccadilly. He did not in the least require a residence in Cambridge-street, and yet he went there the following afternoon quite resolved to engage one.

Mrs. Gordon was precisely what he had expected—a faded, broken-down gentlewoman. She seemed only too thankful to meet with a tenant, and if Sir Denis assented to her terms, with an almost suspicious alacrity she never thought of any ill.

He told her that he was very much from home, would probably stay there only two nights out of the seven, but that he wanted a quiet place to read and study. Mrs. Gordon declared that Cambridge-street was very quiet.

"There are no children," she said, civilly. "I live alone, and I have only one other lodger."

"A gentleman?"

"No, a young lady. When she was a child I was housekeeper in her father's house. He was one of England's merchant princes, but he failed, and then died almost suddenly."

Sir Denis drew a breath of relief. He was right; his stray princess was really no low-born creature.

"And so she lives with you? I daresay it is a pleasant arrangement for you both."

"She has lived with me ever since her husband's death. Poor child! She is young to be a widow."

Sir Denis went home as one who walked on air. He had found his princess, and she was free. She was worthy to mate with the old line of Forbes.

If only he could win her love he should be the happiest of men; and so, feeling like an arch-conspirator the while, he packed a small portmanteau, and the next day took possession of his new residence.

Forbes was not a very remarkable name. Mrs. Gordon's small household would never associate their new inmate with the wealthy baronet and member of Parliament, whose

county seat was one of the show places in England.

There was no deceit, Denis urged, in suppressing his title if he gave his true name. So having stifled his conscience, or endeavoured to, he duly installed himself in Cambridge-street as Mr. Forbes; and Mrs. Gordon, who thought he had a learned look, putting his appearance and his remark about quiet together, informed her dear young friend that he was studying for the Bar—a statement the good old lady firmly believed.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMER had come. "Mr." Forbes was still Mrs. Gordon's tenant, and the melancholy widow did not know how to praise him sufficiently. He was the best lodger she had ever had; he rarely occupied his rooms more than two days a week, and yet he paid full terms as a matter of course.

"I don't like him," returned the other tenant, in rather a dissatisfied tone, when the old lady was singing Denis's praises; "he's too mysterious."

Mrs. Gordon exclaimed, "My dear Violet, how can you say so? He's as open as the day."

The girl, who for a few brief months had been called my lady, who for a short time had had every luxury money could buy poured at her feet, shook her head.

"There is something strange about him, Goody; he never has any letters, no one ever comes to see him. If he really is studying, why doesn't he stay at home to do it?"

Mrs. Ray, as Douglas Forbes's widow had elected to call herself, had unmasked her fellow-tenant's name, but she never guessed that the same roof sheltered her and her enemy; she might never have guessed it but for an accident.

One afternoon, when she was returning from her pupils (Violet toiled hard now at music lessons for daily bread), she stopped before a popular library to gaze at the array of photographs in the window, and there, among the celebrities, was Mrs. Gordon's favourite.

Violet entered the shop, and asked simply whose likeness it was. The proprietor seemed shocked at her ignorance, as he answered it was Sir Denis Forbes, M.P., whose speeches were the talk of London.

The young widow drew down her veil, and left the shop. What did it mean? Why had the man, with whose fame the whole city rang, hidden himself in those humble Cambridge-street lodgings?

A burning blush dyed her cheek; she knew that she never saw him without their acquaintance deepening. She had told Mrs. Gordon she did not like him, but she knew he never lost an opportunity of paying her attention.

He was her enemy, the man who had heaped insult upon her. She remembered her husband calling him fascinating. Well, she admitted his claim to the praise.

Time had passed very sadly with Violet; she came straight from Castle Forbes to her old friend. She told Mrs. Gordon simply that she was a widow, and poor. She meant to earn her living, so she at once dropped the name of Lady Forbes, and depriving her maiden cognomen of its first letter, she introduced herself as Mrs. Ray. Her sweet face, pathetic smile, and deep mourning dress interested people, and by dint of hard work she realized the large income of two pounds a-week. It was not a very liberal sum, but at least it was more than the allowance offered her by her husband's heir. It sufficed her daily wants, and if she grew paler and thinner in the sweet summer sunshine, there was no one to take alarm.

She turned to walk home, full of her strange discovery, when the subject of it came towards her, a smile of pleasure on his face.

"This is a fortunate meeting, Mrs. Ray! I am just going home. I hope you will allow me to escort you?"

Violet raised her dark eyes to his face.

"Does 'home' mean Clarges-street, Picca-

dilly, or Mrs. Gordon's apartments, Sir Denis Forbes?"

Denis looked dismayed.

"You have discovered my secret?"

"I have discovered your deception!"

"And you are angry?"

"It is nothing to do with me."

"If you would only let me explain!"

They were in a secluded part of St. James's Park. Denis spoke with a passionate eagerness. Violet felt her resolution falter; but she remembered the cruel slurs cast on her by this man, and answered coldly,—

"It's no business of mine."

"It may be," he said, eagerly. "I only know I would rather the whole world misjudged me than that you did. You cannot refuse to hear my defence; you are too sweet and true to condemn me unheard. Sit down here and listen to my story."

In perfect silence she obeyed, but her head was turned away. Through all the conversation she never again raised her eyes to his.

"Do you remember the first time I saw you?"

"Perfectly."

"You told me you had just come from France; that you were going on to Germany."

"Very possibly."

"That one very meeting influenced my whole life. No other face could dispel yours from my memory. I never guessed you were another man's wife; I thought of you as a young girl an honest heart might win."

Neither by word or look did she interrupt him.

"I think I always believed we should meet again. I am not a superstitious man, but it seemed to me impossible you could have been allowed to make such an impression on me if I was never to be but a stranger to you. I cherished the hope of seeing you; when, four months later, riches and estates came to me, my first thought was that when I found you I should have a position worthy of your beauty to offer you."

"A position that you obtained by wronging the innocent. You see, Sir Denis, I have heard something of your story."

"You are unjust."

"You were something more than unjust to Lady Forbes."

"I agreed to provide for her."

"But how?"

Denis looked troubled.

"Don't reproach me with her fate. Do you think when I heard of her death I was not full of remorse? I tell you, when Dr. Ward came to me and brought me her farewell letter, I felt I would gladly have given up rank and fortune to restore her to life."

Violet began to think she might have been wrong to write the letter. She had sent it only to break off all connection with her past life, and perhaps afflict Sir Denis with a tinge of remorse.

"Lady Forbes is dead!" went on the Baronet, slowly. "No cruelty towards me can change the story, and I love you. I ought not, perhaps, to speak to you while your loss is so recent, but your words to-day resolve me to risk all. The deceit of which you complain was used simply that I might be admitted to Mrs. Gordon's; that from time to time I might see you. I loved you, I wanted not to lose sight of you. We had no mutual friends; there was no one to introduce us, and give us opportunities of meeting."

Violet felt her eyes wet with tears; she realized that it was just as he had said—he did love her. As his cousin's widow he had been very cruel to her, as herself he would be all tenderness.

"You forget"—Oh, how hard and cold her words sounded—"You are a rich baronet, a famous celebrity. I am a poor unknown widow, who gives music lessons at eighteenpence an hour, and thinks herself lucky to get that."

"I forget everything," said Denis, "except that you are beautiful, and I love you."

"Yours is a grand old race."

"And you would shed fresh lustre on it."

Violet, I will wait any time, I will live for you faithfully, as Jacob did for Rachel, if only you will give me hope, darling. I will spend my life in the one pursuit of your happiness if only you will let me."

Violet's eyes were bent on the ground to hide their tears. What was she to do? The love she had thought never to feel had come to her at last! She knew that Denis Forbes was her hero, her heart's best idol; but what was she to do? As his cousin's widow he would shrink from her, and she could not—she dared not—marry him without revealing her secret.

"Speak to me!" said Sir Denis, fondly.

"Tell me it is not all in vain?"

"I am so sorry," she sobbed. "I wish that I had never been born—that you had never seen my face!"

"Don't say that, child!" he answered, roughly. "My love can't hurt you! The misery is mine—not yours!"

"But it is my fault!"

"You can't help being what you are any more than I can help loving you. Violet, are you sure it is all in vain? You are crying! Are those tears for me and my disappointment?"

"They are for myself, I think," she sobbed. He guessed her secret then. He took her two hands and held them firmly in his.

"You love me, sweet. You may be harsh, and send me from you; but I am sure and positive of one thing—you love me!"

There was no use denying it. If they two must part for all time, he might as well have the poor consolation of knowing the truth.

"Yes; I love you!"

"Then why send me away?"

"You don't understand."

"Make me understand!"

"I love you, but—oh! why will you make me say it? I can never be your wife!"

An awful fear came to Denis. He held her hand more tightly.

"And the obstacle?"

"I can't tell it you."

"Don't you think you owe it me?"

"No."

She was shivering in the summer sunshine.

"Dear," he said, fondly, "don't you know that love pardons much? Mine could bridge over many an obstacle rather than lose you."

"I can't tell you," she sobbed, "you would shrink from me—despise me. Someday, when you have a wife and little children, or when I am dying I will tell you, but not now—not now."

"You have blighted my dearest hopes," said Sir Denis, hoarsely; "you have crushed all the joy out of my life: Oh! Violet! why can't you trust me?"

She shook her head.

"You might marry me just for pity, and I wouldn't have that. No, there is nothing for us but to part. Life goes very crossways, Denis; if only we had met two years ago how happy we might have been."

"Two years ago! you were not married then?"

"No, I had never seen my husband—had never thought of love or marriage then."

"I think you are wrong," said Denis, hotly. "You are sacrificing us both to a chimera. I tell you, Violet, there can be nothing in your past, nothing in your whole life my love cannot forgive."

But she had risen. Before he quite knew her purpose she had left him; he was sitting alone in the summer sunshine, and the woman he would fain have cherished and made the mistress of his stately home was fast disappearing in the distance.

A staid servant arrived in Cambridge-street the next day, who paid a month's rent instead of notice, packed "Mr. Forbes's" effects, and departed.

When Violet returned from her day's teaching Mrs. Gordon was sitting alone in the deserted drawing-room, actually crying.

"He was a sweet young man, we shall never see his like again."

Violet could have cried, too, for company

There might be other tenants as eligible as Denis for Mrs. Gordon's drawing-rooms, but no other lover would fill his place in her heart.

She had sent him from her of her own act and deed, because she would not confess she was his cousin's widow. It was only twenty-four hours since they parted, and already she seemed to have lived an eternity. What would her life be worth, spent away from Denis?

She was only twenty-one, a long life might stretch out before her; she might live fifty years or longer, without being a very old woman. What would they all be like, if she must spend them apart from Denis?

She uttered no complaint, she never mentioned his name, only it seemed as though from that bright summer's afternoon the beautiful girl was changed. Even in the early days of her widowhood she had not been so listless and depressed as in the weeks which followed the departure of "Mr." Forbes.

She gave her lessons as usual, she paid Mrs. Gordon the weekly sum agreed upon, but it seemed as if the spirit had gone out of everything she said or did—that she had no longer any interest in life.

"I am sure you are not well," Goody said to her one September day, when Violet was shivering over the fire, on her return from her pupils. "It's not cold, dear; it's more like summer, and here you're trembling as though it was the depths of winter!"

"I can't help it, Goody."

"But it's not right at your age. I wish you would go and see a doctor."

She repeated the wish so often, that more to satisfy her than from any faith in the advice, Violet yielded, and sparing an afternoon from her work, and, what was harder, a guinea from her slender purse, she presented herself at the consulting rooms of a physician whose name stood high in his profession.

He was out of town, the page said, but a friend was attending in his stead. It mattered little to Violet; she knew that neither Dr. Bayford nor any other practitioner could cure her malady, and so she waited her turn to be ushered to the great man's presence. She never raised her veil until she was in his sanctum. Then she gave a little start, for it was no stranger waiting to receive her, but the good old man who had soothed her sorrows at Castle Forbes.

He pressed a fatherly kiss on her brow, as he asked, reproachfully,—

"Was it kind of you to deceive me, to let your friend write and tell me you were dead?"

"I wrote myself!" said Violet, unconscious of the Irish sound her speech must have had. "I meant that I was dead to all who had known me as Lady Forbes!"

"You are a sadly, wilful creature! And what have you been doing with yourself besides overwhelming Sir Denis and your old friend with remorse?"

"Did he feel remorse? Was he just a little sorry?"

"He felt very keen remorse! He told me once he would give half his income not to have your fate upon his conscience."

"I suppose he wanted to be able to hate me again? Perhaps he thought it cowardly to hate anyone who was dead?"

"Perhaps! Now, Lady Forbes remember you came here to see Bayford, and I am going to prescribe for you. Once more, what have you been doing with yourself?"

"Teaching."

"I thought as much—teaching and starving."

"No, not that. I have always earned enough for my wants."

"And yet twelve months have changed you like this. Don't you know you are a mere shadow of the winsome wife Sir Douglas brought home to Castle Forbes?"

"I know I am getting gradually old and ugly, but —"

"You look a child, and you are quite pretty enough to win hearts and break them. My

complaint against you is very different; you look as if you were fading away."

"I wish I was."

"My dear, my dear, you mustn't talk so."

"There isn't much to live for. Working hard for daily bread; toiling in a name that is not one's own; bereft of all I cared for, I don't think many people would envy me my life, Dr. Ward."

"You won't have a life to be envied, if you go on like this," said the Doctor, gruffly. "Look here, I am going down to Langley tomorrow. I mean to take you with me."

Langley was the name of the village nearest to Castle Forbes.

"And if I refuse to go?"

"I don't think you will. The country air will set you up, and the most industrious of teachers take a holiday sometimes. I shall think you're too proud to visit an old country doctor and his sister, if you refuse."

"Perhaps Miss Ward won't like me."

"Try her!"

"I should like to come, dearly, but —"

"What's your objection?"

"I am afraid of meeting Sir Denis Forbes."

"He's not a dragon!"

"But I couldn't meet him, it would kill me."

"You won't stand much chance, my dear. Sir Denis is in Scotland; he hasn't been near his own home since last February."

Violet put her hand into the doctor's. "I will come!"

Mrs. Gordon was delighted at the success of her advice, when she saw Violet return, looking brighter and more animated than she had done for months. The good old soul rejoiced that her favourite should have such a change. Of course she was not intrusted with the secret that "Mrs. Ray" was Lady Forbes. Violet, who knew how she detested letter-writing, made her happy by saying she should not expect to hear while she was away in Surrey.

Miss Ward had received a letter telling her of the coming visitor. If she dreaded having a fashionable lady on her hands, her fears faded at the first sight of Violet's sweet, sad, face. She took her in her arms, and told her they would soon nurse her into health.

Then began a time of pleasant ease; both host and hostess seemed to have but one thought, that of caring for the young widow. Of course, the rumour crept about the village that Lady Forbes had come back and was staying at the White House. Many people called merely from curiosity, but Miss Ward always explained that her guest was in delicate health, and so the visitors had to depart without a sight of her.

Sir Denis returned unexpectedly, when Violet had been at Langley a fortnight, and the butler who presided over the baronet's solitary dinner could not resist telling him the news.

"My lady has come back, Sir Denis, she is staying at the White House with Dr. Ward."

"My lady! Do you mean Sir Douglas's widow?"

"Just that, Sir Denis. I went down myself to inquire, but Miss Ward told me her ladyship was too ill to see anyone."

Denis took his hat after dinner, and strolled across to the White House. He had not forgotten who had last spoken to him of Lady Forbes. She would surely approve his attempt to pay honour to his cousin's widow.

Henever used ceremony at the White House; he just turned the handle of the door and walked in. He met a servant in the hall, who said her master and mistress were both out.

"It doesn't matter; my visit is to Lady Forbes. Is she at home?"

"She's in the drawing-room, Sir Denis."

She was a new retainer, fresh the day before, and she did not understand the very strict seclusion in which the guest immured herself.

"It's just as well the Wards are out," thought Denis, as he opened the drawing-room door. "My first interview with Douglas's widow must be an awkward one—better that it should have no spectators."

He opened the door and entered. Then his heart seemed to stand still. On a low couch near the fire sat the one woman he had desired for his wife, the fair face graven for ever on his memory.

"Violet!"

He was at her side. Violet's head was turned as though she could not meet his eyes.

"Violet, won't you speak to me?"

"I think it was cruel of you to come here."

"I didn't come to see you," he began in excuse; "I hadn't an idea you were here. Do you know the Wards?"

"Yes."

"And you are staying here?"

"Yes."

"My dear," and Denis's voice softened strangely; "how ill you look. Violet, I have never ceased to love you. Don't you think you could change your mind?"

Enter the new servant suddenly, with coals for the fire; by accident she brushed across Violet's black drapery.

"I beg your pardon, my lady."

The word was a revelation to Denis. He waited till she had gone, then he began the attack.

"Why did she call you my lady? But I can guess. Violet, is that why you sent me away because you are Sir Douglas's widow?"

"Yes."

"And you cannot forgive me the unkind things I said of you before I ever saw you."

"That is not it."

"What is it then?"

No answer.

"Violet, don't you think you owe me an explanation? Months ago you confessed you loved me; you said then a secret in your past separated us."

"So it does."

"What is it?"

"I deceived you; I let you think I was Mrs. Ray, and all the while I was Lady Forbes."

"I don't feel overwhelmed at that, child; you must make your barriers stronger if you don't want them knocked down."

"If you thought it a *mesalliance* for Sir Douglas —"

"I had not seen you then," he interrupted. "I'm afraid I said a great many rash things. Only, sweetheart, from the moment I saw you I have had but one wish, one desire—to call you mine for ever."

A loud double knock announced the return of the host and hostess. Before this Denis had drawn the pretty brown head to rest on his shoulder. She uttered no remonstrance; she had not spoken her consent yet, but Sir Denis thought he would have his desire.

"I may tell them, Violet."

"Tell them what?"

"That you have promised to be my wife!"

"But I haven't."

The door was being opened, scarce another moment and the new-comers would interrupt the *illicite*. Denis put one arm round Violet and gathered her to his heart, then as he kissed her again and again, he whispered,—

"Promise me, and I will let you go."

And Violet, thinking perhaps, that the sight of herself in her enemy's arms would be surprising to her host and hostess, whispered back the answer Denis craved. He was as good as his word then. Very tenderly he released her, and leaving her on the sofa went forward to meet the doctor and his sister.

"I have been making acquaintance with Lady Forbes," he said, gaily. "Ward, it was awfully good of you to bring her here, but I mean to rob you of her. She has promised to come to Castle Forbes."

Dr. and Miss Ward stared. The two foes had, indeed, "made friends" suddenly to settle this in one brief meeting. Besides, was it correct for a young widow of twenty-one to become the guest of a bachelor, the right side of thirty? They thought not.

"Don't look so horrified," said the Baronet, simply. "I met Violet this year in London, and I loved her at first sight, without the least

idea of her identity. She sent me away with the greatest cruelty, but now—

"But now he knows everything," added Violet, prettily; "and he doesn't seem to mind my being Sir Douglas's widow."

"I mind her being it very much," said Denis, gravely; "I want her to become my wife instead—my much-loved wife, the mistress of the Castle."

Ward looked delighted; he rubbed his hands with intense satisfaction.

"My dear," he said to Lady Forbes; "I never heard of an engagement which gave me greater pleasure, or surprised me more."

"I don't see anything surprising," said Denis. "Who could see Violet without loving her?"

"I was thinking of your conduct before you had seen her," replied the Doctor, dryly. "My dear child," to Violet; "have you any idea what he used to call you?"

"Something very awful, no doubt."

"I will tell you myself," said Denis, turning to her with a look of fond affection; "or Dr. Ward will always be holding it over my head as a threat. It was—"

"She will never forgive you," put in the Doctor.

"I think she will; it was that dreadful person, but I have a new name for her now, and one which suits her better—Sweetheart."

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

"LIBERAL voting" is the new name for an old fashioned disease—the poll evil.

The latest hair-restorer is a thief who stole a quantity of wigs, and afterwards returned them to the owner.

A country parson, in a notice of a lecture given by a phrenologist, says: "Behind the platform is a large gallery of life-size portraits, twenty feet high."

"Did you dust the furniture this morning, Mary?" asked the mistress. "No, ma'am, replied Mary; "it didn't need it; it had all the dust on it that it could easily hold."

"Don't you think you have a good mamma, to spread such nice large slices of bread-and-jam for you?" said an old lady to a little boy who was enjoying his tea. "Yes," was the reply; "but she would do still better if she'd let me spread on the jam myself."

SOCIETY possesses two ladies who both bear the name of Isabelle, and who, standing to each other as they do in the relation of mother and daughter, are presumably of different ages, though, indeed, the difference might easily pass unperceived. A friend was heard lately to give the following account of them: "The one is named Isabelle—the other is a Belle."

A YOUNG exquisite, dressed faultlessly, and with a pair of shoes which tapered to a point in the most fashionable style, was visiting at a country house. A bright little four-year-old boy looked him all over until his eyes rested on his shoes. He stared at this own chubby feet and then at the visitor's, and looking up, said: "I say, is your toes all cutted off but one?"

One day, when Brakke, the celebrated London lawyer and wit, was, as usual, on his way to Westminster Hall, with his large bag full of briefs, he was accosted by a Jew boy, who asked him if he was a dealer in old clothes. "No, you Hebrew imp," replied the counsellor, "I am a dealer in new suits."

The obliging visitor, to show that he is really fond of children, and that the dear, little one is not annoying him in the least, treats the kid to a ride upon his knee. "Trot! trot! trot! How do you like that, my boy? Is that nice?" "Yes, sir," replied the child, "but not so nice as on the real donkey—the one with four legs!"

"What do you mean, Charles, by staying so long? When you went out you said you could go over to the Browns' in ten minutes at the outside, and here you have been gone over two hours." I said I could go over there in ten minutes on the outside, and so I did. The two hours extra, you know, I spent inside."

A GENTLEMAN, with the same Christian and surname, took lodgings in the same house with James Smith. The consequence was, eternal confusion of calls and letters. Indeed, the postman had no alternative but to share the letters equally between the two. "This is intolerable, sir," said our friend, "and you must quit." "Why am I to quit more than you?" "Because you are James the Second—and must abdicate."

"Good morning, is Mr. Black in?" "No, sah; he's gone to his business, sah." "Well, is Mrs. Black in?" "Dat depends, sah. What does you want wid her?" "Why, here's a milk bill of thirty-two dollars I'd like her to settle." "She am not in, sah." "But I know she is in." "Can't help it, sah. The orders am that she am never in for milk and meat bills and sitch. Good morning; I has to go; she am callin' me."—American Paper.

At a school examination a clergyman was decanting on the necessity of growing up loyal and useful citizens. In order to give emphasis to his remarks he pointed to a large flag hanging on one side of the school-room and said:—"Boys what is that flag for?" An arch-brother, who understood the condition of the room better than the speaker's rhetoric, exclaimed:—"To hide the dirt, sir."

THE FAIR TRING.—"Now, Mr. Overcharge, what will it cost to have hot and cold water put all through my house?" "Well, I can't give a very close estimate until the job is completed. I will do the fair thing by you, though." So the plumber went to work, and three months later he owned the house.

THE KING'S JESTER.—In olden times it was the custom of kings to keep court jesters. Francis I. of France kept one who was very witty, and was in the habit of poking fun even at the great lords of the court. Most of them took his jokes in good part, but a few did not like them, and one threatened to kill the jester. The latter went to the king and complained of the threat. "Have no fear," said the king, "he won't do it, and if he does he shall not live an hour before I have his head cut off." "I am very much obliged to your Majesty for your gracious protection," replied the jester, "but could you not manage to cut his head off an hour before he kills me instead of an hour after? That would certainly be far preferable."

UNCONSCIOUS WIT.—A London waiter was both witty and sarcastic, and didn't know the fact. "Do you call that a veal cutlet, waiter?" said an exquisite, one of the most delicate type even in that favoured region of exquisites, the West-end. "Why, sir, such a veal cutlet, as that is an insult to every self-respecting calf in the British Empire!" The waiter hung his head in very shame for a moment, and then replied, in the language of humblest apology, "I really didn't intend to insult you, sir."

A PAIR OF SPECTACLES.—A farmer was served with a writ. He went to a solicitor, explained the case, and handed some documents to him. Come again at the end of three days," said the solicitor, "and I will let you have my opinion." At the end of the three days the farmer duly presented himself at the office. The solicitor shook his head, and said: "Your case is very perplexing. I cannot see to the bottom of it. Come again at the end of eight days." The farmer presented himself again at the appointed time, and received the same answer. He was very much surprised, and at first could not understand the situation. He soon, however, comprehended it. He took two gold pieces from his pocket, placed them on the table, and said, "Here is a pair of spectacles. You will now doubtless be able to see to the bottom of my case."

POETIC husband:—"Hear this sonnet of mine, Emily. It has cost me much labour; and though I say it who shouldn't it's not unworthy of Shakespeare or Milton." Prosaic wife:—"Certainly, my love. But I wish you wouldn't write sonnets on our best cream-laid note paper! I must get you some foolscap!"

SOME soldiers were digging a well one day, and when they came to the water the commanding officer went to inspect progress. "Well, Cowan," said he to the Irishman at the bottom of the well, "you have found the water at last." "Ah, barmel," replied the other, "it all depends upon knowing how the thing ought to be done. Any other man but myself would have gone forty feet deeper without coming to it!"

"Mary," said a proud mother to her handsome daughter the other night, "while the two were at a reception. "Mary, do you notice how rapturously young Mr. Caskeel, the undertaker's son, is watching you? You've certainly smitten him!" "Yes, ma," replied the daughter, "I notice that wherever I go his eyes are following me, and it makes me shudder. I imagine that he is speculating in his mind as to what size coffin I would require!"

FOOTE'S QUADRUPLE JOKE.

FOOTE, the English comic actor, made a wager that he would upset the dignity of a certain head-waiter at the principal hotel in Bath, who had the name of being the most dignified man in Britain (says an English paper). Foote went to the hotel with three friends—an engineer who had lost an eye, a cavalry officer who had lost an arm, and an old sea captain who had lost a leg. The precious quartet ensconced themselves in the four corners of the room and bawled for the waiter, who came in with a more than ordinary assumption of dignity, as a tactful protest against their unceremonious treatment of him.

"Waiter," cried the one-eyed engineer, "come and take off my eye-glass," adding, as the waiter swelled with indignation, "and while you're about it, just take out my eye."

"Your eye, sir?" shouted the startled dignitary.

"Yes, my eye. Don't you understand English? Look sharp."

Eye-glass and glass eye came a way together, and the waiter reconnoitred them doubtfully as they lay in the palm of his hand like a man eyeing a watch that has suddenly stopped. Just then the one-armed dragoon shouted in his turn:

"Waiter, take off my glove; and, now that I think of it, take off my arm."

Glove and hand gave way at the first touch, and the waiter, appalled to see his customers all tumbling to pieces like a mosaic puzzle, was turning hastily away, when the one-legged sailor roared:

"Waiter, pull off my starboard boot, and you may as well pull off my leg, too."

The poor waiter shudderingly complied, mentally repeating every prayer he could think of. Instantly the previously loosened straps of the cork leg gave way, and down went the man of dignity on his august back, with the artificial limb quivering in his clutches. It was enough. Forgetting everything in his agonized longing to escape from this chamber of horrors, the ill-starred waiter, casting a terrified glance at the fragments which strewn the carpet, sprang towards the door. But before he could reach it, Foote himself—the length and flexibility of whose neck might have aroused the envy of an ostrich—twisted his head right round over his shoulder, and called out in a voice hollow and unearthly enough to frighten a Bengal tiger:

"Waiter, come and take off my hat, and while you're at it, take off my head."

Human nature could bear no more. The martyred waiter gave one yell worthy of a Cherokee Indian, and made but a single bound from the top of the stairs to the bottom, upsetting not only his dignity, but himself, so thoroughly, that to the day of his death he was never quite right again.

SOCIETY.

In obedience to the Queen's command, telegraphed from Darmstadt to Mrs. Blagden, at High Wycombe, that lady placed a primrose wreath on the grave of Lord Beaconsfield, in the name of Her Majesty. Other wreaths were received at Hughenden from various parts of the country.

The Emperor and the Empress of Russia returned to St. Petersburg on the 17th April. On the evening of the 7th the ladies and demoiselles à portrait, the ladies of the court, the knights, and other personages connected with the Imperial Household; the officers of the guard of the fleet, and the army; the marshals of the provinces of St. Petersburg, and the marshals of the provinces met at the Winter Palace. Three cannon shots fired between eleven and twelve on the evening of Saturday gave the signal that the religious ceremony preceding the Russian Easter Sunday was about to commence. The ladies wore the Russian national costume, and the gentlemen the gala Court uniform. The knights of the order of St. Andrew wore their collars. The ceremony was performed in the presence of their Majesties.

On the 22nd April, at St. Peter's Church, Eaton-square, was solemnised the marriage of Mr. S. Maxwell Alexander, of Rosepark, co. Londonderry, with Henrietta Constance, eldest daughter of Sir Frederick William Heygate, Bart. The bride wore a handsome dress, the bodice and train being of cream broché satin, and the satin petticoat was elegantly draped with Limerick lace; a wreath of natural orange-blossoms was covered by a long tulle veil, which reached to the edge of her dress; and her ornaments were three diamond stars, the gift of the bridegroom, and a gold necklace set with pearls and diamonds. The bridesmaids were attired in cream nun's veiling, the kilts akirts being edged with wide cream lace, and their cream lace bonnets were bound with ruby velvet; each wore a gold bangle, set with pearls and diamonds, the bridegroom's present, and carried a fragrant bouquet of various flowers.

The festivities at Normanhurst, on Monday, 21st April, in honour of the coming of age of Mr. Brassey, only son of Sir Thomas and Lady Brassey, were ended with a Grand Fancy Ball, which went off with great éclat. A large party had assembled, and various entertainments were given. Extensive preparations had been made for the ball, to which all the county were invited, many coming long distances, while the inn at Battle had been secured for some of the party coming from Kent, with the Marchioness of Abergavenny, who could not all be accommodated at Normanhurst.

A temporary room had been added to the beautiful suite, well adapted for most entertainments, but on this occasion it was necessary to add to the number. Consequently, the whole terrace which faces one side of the house was enclosed, including the flight of stairs which leads to the spacious fernery, and through which the supper-rooms were reached. The fernery and supper-rooms are literally under the reception-rooms, and are one of the features of the mansion. Lady Brassey received her guests in the large inner hall, in which dancing took place, as well as in the Pompeian and drawing-rooms.

These rooms are filled with treasures of art, many having interesting histories attached, as there are tapestries which belonged to Marie Antoinette, and looking-glasses used by Mme. de Maintenon, as well as many valuable pictures. The dining-room was used for tea and refreshments during the evening, having previously been arranged for the large party (sixty) who sat down to dinner before the ball at small round tables.

STATISTICS.

A REPORT recently issued by the German Imperial Statistical Department shows that illiteracy is very palpably declining among recruits for the army. In 1876 the percentage of men who could neither read nor write in the whole German army was 2.37, and in 1883 it was found to have fallen to 1.32.

PROGRESS OF BRITISH SHIPPING.—The tonnage of sailing and steam vessels, with cargoes and in ballast, entered and cleared at ports in the United Kingdom grew from 9,439,867 tons in 1840, to 64,961,753 tons in 1883, the British tonnage increasing from 6,490,495 to 47,039,079, and the foreign from 2,949,182 to 17,922,674. For both British and foreign tonnage, 1883 was the heaviest year recorded, but whereas in that year the foreign tonnage increased only 100,000 tons, the British increased 3,250,000 tons, and between 1870 and 1883 the British tonnage has nearly doubled. The total tonnage of the merchant navy of the United Kingdom was 6,908,650 tons in 1882, as against 1,292,294 of the United States (registered for overseas), 1,226,650 of the German Empire, 930,004 of Italy, and 933,017 of France. The tonnage of vessels built in the United Kingdom was 472,896 in 1880; 608,878 in 1881; 783,051 in 1882; and 892,216 in 1883, the last year being by far the largest for a quarter of a century. The tonnage built in the United States in 1883 was 265,430—a less total than in either of the two previous years. The total number of seamen employed in vessels belonging to the United Kingdom in 1883 was 200,737, a higher total than for several years previously.

GEMS.

NEVER accuse others to excuse yourself. The virtue of prosperity is temperance; the virtue of adversity is fortitude.

It is better to lead than drag—induce than compel—instruct ignorance that punish it.

With every member of a household anxious to promote the welfare and happiness of each other by kind words and deeds, how cheerful the family circle can be made!

MANY persons fancy themselves friendly when they are only officious. They counsel not so much that they should become wise, as that they should be recognised as teachers of wisdom.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO REMOVE TEA-STAINS.—Clear boiling water will remove tea-stains. Pour the water through the stain, and thus prevent it spreading over the fabric.

MATRE D'HOTEL SAUCE.—Make as above and when the sauce is taken off the fire, add the juice of half a lemon. If the acid is allowed to boil with the parsley, it will spoil the colour.

PARSLEY SAUCE.—Boil a pint of water throw into it a tablespoonful of finely-minced parsley and half a teaspoonful of salt, then stir two ounces of flour mixed smooth in a gill of cold water. Stir over the fire until it thickens, break into it one or two ounces of butter, and, as soon as it is melted, serve the sauce.

EEL SOUP.—Put about two ounces of butter in a stewpan with a variety of any vegetables that are in season, cut thin, and any approved herbs. Cover closely, and let them stew by a slow fire till tender, stirring occasionally that they may not burn; add a cup or two of water, and leave them to simmer. Skin two pounds of eels, divide them into lengths of two inches. Fry them in butter a pale brown, lay them on a dish, dredge plenty of flour in the frying pan, let it brown; add water enough to make the thickening, and put it, with the eels, into the soup.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE scene of the downfall of the French Second Empire—Sedan—is to lose the last vestige of its former military power. As the town was not included in the new defensive plans the fortifications have already been levelled, but the War Minister has now ordered the demolition of the large donjon commanding the city, which has enormously high strong walls and vast subterranean passages. Sedan itself seems fairly contented in its now peaceful state, and has undergone wonderful changes within the last few years. Houses have sprung up beyond the old walls, commerce is improving, and the town is gradually becoming a handsome, prosperous, modern French city, contrasting curiously with the old-fashioned ways and appearance of its neighbours just across the Belgian border.

THE RIGHT WIFE.—A physician writes to young men as follows:—"My profession has thrown me among women of all classes, and my experience teaches me that the Creator never gave man a greater proof of his love than to place women here with him. My advice is—Go and propose to the most sensible girl you know. If she accepts you, tell her how much your income is, and from what source derived, and tell her that you will divide the last shilling with her, and that you will love her with all your heart into the bargain; and then keep your promise. My word for it, she will live within your income, and to your last hour you will regret that you did not marry sooner. Stop worrying about feminine extravagance and feminine untruth. Just you be true to her—love her sincerely, and a more fond, faithful, foolish slave you will never meet anywhere. You will not deserve her, I know; but she will never know it."

OVERPOWERING PERSONALITY.—You have undoubtedly met people who love to make themselves "numerous," as the slang phrase hath it. They usually affect extremes in dress, elbow you into the mud if the weather is foul and the crossings narrow, and crowd you unmercifully in the omnibus or other public conveyances. At the theatre they are in their element. Their legs lie around loose on the floor; their arms obtrude over the sides of the chairs and their personality is so overpowering that you are tempted to suggest an amputation of their superfluous members. Such people always go out between acts. They make their neighbours get up and down a number of times. Sometimes they are fat, and addicted to oozing hair- oil, and then you are conscious of a total eclipse, and feel after you have deposited yourself in your seat that your chances of comfort are exceedingly dim; again, they are thin and drollish, and thrust their angles at you. You are made to feel your own insignificance in the face of such overwhelming elegance.

A PARISIAN ROMANCE.—The history of a certain house in Paris is being retold now on account of the death of its owner. A young girl came from the country to Paris to make her fortune by her beauty. She began by selling bouquets in the street, and as she was in rags, with hunger to put its marks upon her face, it is no wonder that she was not immediately successful. At last one day she sat down in a corner in despair, when a man gave her a louis d'or and passed along. This, so the legend goes, gave her courage, and she vowed that some day she would build a palace on that very spot. In the course of time she rose to be one of the most brilliant women of the circle which in Paris is more conspicuous than elsewhere, and did not forget to build this palace. Afterwards, as so many of her class have done, she married respectably, and even magnificently, and went to live as a marquise on a remote estate, where she lived in splendour till last January, dying therein peace at a good old age.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. G.—It means, "The world is woman's book."

A. M.—No. Such a dilatory lover would have no right which a spirited girl would be bound to respect.

L. B.—The lady's heart was too bold, and should have been rebuffed in the most chilling, but polite way.

T. D. S.—She would have the legal title under such circumstances, and would probably be able to maintain it.

W. D.—There is no society that does the work you describe, except for boys who have grown up under its care, and to whose officers they are known.

H. T.—It would be natural to think that he did not care particularly for either of the ladies, but wished to be kind and polite to both of them.

W. F. R.—Such a matter depends upon the custom of the community in which a lady resides, and the habits of her own family.

P. B.—It would be kind and considerate for her to do so, and if she did not, she could not justly find fault with him if he should not take her to any more parties.

T. V.—There is great variety in the chemical composition of inks, and a recipe such as you desire, to be of any value, should be based on a chemical analysis of the ink employed, and which you desire to remove.

W. R.—It may be that she likes you, but does not wish to show it in the presence of others. Or she may treat you coolly at such times in order to call you out and make you declare your intentions.

L. M.—We should say of the gentleman, if he is not insane, that he is remarkably patient and modest. We can only counsel the lady to observe a "masterly inactivity." Let him severely alone.

LAKE.—You cannot obtain a divorce. We advise you to smother your jealous feelings and endeavour to live happily with your wife. You are foolish to allow this forgotten matter to destroy your peace of mind.

W. G.—A gentleman should not take the arm of a lady unless it be necessary to help her into a carriage, or over some obstacle. In all other cases the lady should take the gentleman's arm.

ANGELA.—It is claimed that deafness may be cured by dropping warm glycerine in the ear, drop by drop. To cure hoarseness hold a ball of borax in the mouth for ten minutes. Often a cold may be avoided by keeping the mouth closed in the open air.

QUEEN.—You had better take your mother's advice. Your beau is rather youthful. It is not very wise for a young lady to engage herself to marry one who is under age. Until twenty-one a young man is an infant or minor in the eyes of the law.

KATE.—It is wrong to marry one man and love another. You are so young you can afford to wait, and it is very unlikely that your kindred will force you to marry when you state the facts. At least they will give time to consider the whole matter.

M. G. B.—From what you say of your husband, there is no doubt but he would do what he believes to be right with regard to the education of your eldest daughter. His desire to treat all his children alike, and give them all an equal chance, is a very proper one.

M. P. B.—It would be well for your husband to write to his niece, and request her to have the family lawyer look after his interests, and inform him what property he has, when he can realise something from it, and give him all other necessary information on the subject.

W. P.—It might not be improper, in the sense of doing something reprehensible, but it might be unwise for her to do so. In such a matter a young lady should consult her family, and endeavour to act with judgment and circumspection.

R. S.—You would either have to learn to do the general work of a jeweller, or else obtain a situation in some establishment whose business would be large enough to furnish you with constant employment in your special line.

F. S. J.—It is not common for gentlemen to have autograph albums, although some men set great store by them. It would be rather presuming for a gentleman to ask a lady, with whom he was but slightly acquainted, for her autograph.

R. S.—You must endeavour to communicate either by letter or through a friend with your betrothed. You are subjecting her to a very trying ordeal by your long absence and silence. You are right in thinking that by overlooking it for another year she may lose heart and hope.

D. M. O.—The Fountain of Egeria is a name given to a vaulted chamber of brickwork in the valley of the Arno, about a mile from Rome. It derives its name from the belief that it is the site of the grove and sacred fountain where Numa held his nightly meetings with the nymph Egeria. Modern writers have, however, determined that the spot which has so long been regarded as the Grove of Egeria is not the one which Numa visited, and have placed the fountain and valley within the present walls of the city, near where the

Via Appia crosses the Arno, not far from the ancient Porta Osena. Byron, Sotheby, Macaulay, and others have all had something to say about Egeria. Hilliard says:—"The legend is one of the most genuine flowers of poetry that ever started from the hard rock of the Roman mind."

W. J.—If the cow dies or has to be killed on account of the wound you gave her, you will be liable for her value, which can be determined by the appraisement of disinterested parties chosen for that purpose, or by agreement between you and her owner, or by the verdict of a jury.

C. K. L.—In ordinary circumstances, the ladies in question, knowing of your visit to the place, would be expected to call on you. This is a well settled point. It is then your duty to return their visit. Your writing is neat and careful, but a little artificial.

D. F.—We think the lightning rods desirable. The accidents to which you refer are preventable with ordinary care, are not numerous, and are not an adequate reason against this form of danger. Of course you must make sure that you are dealing with competent and trustworthy persons in making your bargains.

D. M. O.—1. The first finger is that which is nearest the thumb on the ordinary hand. 2. There is no absolute rule regarding the finger for the engagement ring, but the custom fixes the third finger of the right hand. 3. The wedding ring is usually put on the third finger of the left hand.

L. D. S.—Possibly something in one of your letters may have offended her. Why not visit her and have a personal explanation. You are very young, and the lady may think that you are, therefore, scarcely an eligible aspirant for her hand. Do not allow the matter to trouble you too seriously.

REST, DARLING, REST!

I've planted all thy favourite flowers above thee:
Sleep calmly, dear one, on earth's quiet breast;
Thou'rt forgotten by the hearts that love thee—
Rest, darling, rest!

Thy cradle song the wind is softly singing;
I hear the murmur of the restless waves,
Whose solemn chaunt for evermore is ringing
O'er many graves.

Heaven's own blue sky looks bluer where thou'rt lying,
Though lonely is thy pretty, bright home nest;
Sleep calmly, dear—for thus there's no more dying—
Rest, darling, rest!

A. J.

A. B. W.—We think that after this young lady's explanation you are foolish to insist upon a special invitation. The young lady thinks that if you desire to call, knowing that you are welcome, you will do so; and that if you do not enjoy her society she prefers not to urge it upon you. You write very well.

A. K.—We think that the young lady's relatives may have some good reason for opposing your suit. In any case we advise you not to thrust yourself into a family where you are manifestly not wanted. Perhaps the young lady is not yet old enough to marry, or you may not be in a position to support a wife nicely.

F. W.—Our advice to you is, cease to do wrong. No good can possibly come from an intimacy condemned by every law of society and morality. You should strive to win your husband back to his allegiance by an example of honour, tenderness, and duty. You have certainly cause to reproach yourself in this affair, however great may be the fault of your husband.

A. B.—You had better continue to treat gentlemen in the same quiet and discreet manner as you describe. It is not the part of a young lady to court the attention of gentlemen, or to attract the notice of strangers. If the young man who formerly visited you desires to woo you he will not be restrained by your modest behaviour.

L. D. F.—The law used to be that any member of a corporation for trade purposes was liable for all its debts. This arrangement entailed loss on many, and laws were passed making members of corporations liable only up to the amount of their own shares. Hence the word "limited," which is required to be added to the title of all companies on this basis.

HARRY S.—She could certainly sue you, and might get a verdict against you, if you did not have a distinct understanding with her that your engagement was actually broken off, before you married somebody else. Such a remark on her part, made in a pet, would not be a sure defence for you in a suit for breach of promise.

MATTIE.—Your own feminine intuitions ought to enable you to judge pretty nearly what the young man's feelings are towards you. If they do not, you must await development, as a lady is precluded from taking any overt steps to find out whether a man loves her or not. From what you say about the young man's behaviour, it looks very much as though he were actually in love with you.

L. G. F.—1. To clean ostrich feathers requires considerable skill and experience. It is done by cutting some white curd soap in small pieces, pouring boiling water on them, and then adding a little pearlash.

When the soap is quite dissolved, and the mixture cool enough for the hand to bear, the feathers are plunged into it, then drawn through the hand until all the dirt disappears. After this they are passed through a clean lather, to which a small amount of bluing has been added, and then rinsed in cold water containing sufficient blue to give them a good colour. They are freed from the water by beating against the hand, and dried by shaking them near a fire. When perfectly dried, each fibre is curled separately with a blunt knife or ivory paper holder.

F. X. S.—It would be far better to learn a lighter trade than undermine your health and strength by persisting in your present employment. You are young enough to learn any trade. The carpenter and joiner's trade is a good one. Bookbinding and paper-hanging are light and fairly remunerative. You had better take up a trade which you can acquire near your home. You write very well indeed.

LILLA.—Your nervousness and agitation probably cause you to exaggerate the importance of the affair which distresses you. You should try to become composed in your feelings, and let the matter rest for a while, until you can consider it calmly and intellectually. If your wife had supposed there was anything so dreadful in the letters as you seem to imagine, it is not likely that she would have left them lying exposed in a bureau drawer to which you had access at any and all times.

W. C. N.—We think that you are foolish to allow the preference of your mother-in-law for her daughter's child to trouble you. In a few years she may change, as our fancies and preferences for children cannot be controlled. Your child is as nearly related to its grandmother as any of her grandchildren. Endeavour to make your son as good and pleasant a child as possible, and his grandmother will be sure to love him.

R. K.—If you have stated your case correctly, and have proofs of the prior marriage of your husband, you are not legally married, supposing his wife to be alive. The assumption of another name at the marriage ceremony does not affect the legality of a marriage. It would be prudent to submit your case to a respectable lawyer, and to be governed by his advice. Do not be afraid to go to a lawyer of good reputation.

D. S.—A gentleman is commonly introduced to a lady and his name pronounced first, and it is enough for her to bow unless he makes a move toward hand-shaking. To his formal protestations of delight at meeting her a bow with a benign smile is enough. A girl should await a young man's request to be allowed to call, unless in special cases. Usually, a girl will reply civilly without reference to her parents, because she does not assume that he means more than courtesy. For a general introduction a general bow is sufficient. Good sense, good temper, and good taste will keep one from serious errors and difficulties in all these little matters.

R. T.—Where an appeal is made to the courts, the children of very tender age are generally awarded to the mother's care if she is a proper person, and able to make suitable provision for them. If the father seeks to recover them as they become more advanced, and can provide a suitable home for them, the courts incline to give him the possession. This is more likely to be done if he offers also to support the mother. After the children reach years of discretion, so as to know their own mind, the Judge is frequently governed by their preference.

HENRIETTA R.—1. There is no rule as to the side on which a lady is to be placed. The gentleman on the pavement is supposed to be outside. Otherwise to give the left arm to the lady and have the right to protect her, seems the natural and ordinary plan. 2. The meaning of the expression "philopona" is that when an almond at the dinner-table has two kernels the open hands one of them to a second person. Should he then pass any object to the receiver without saying "philopona" he is held bound to pay a forfeit if the other repeats the word, and *vice versa*. The derivation is doubtful.

THE LONDON READER, Post free. Three-half-pence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 201, Now Ready, price Sixpence post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. XLII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. B. BECK, and Printer, by WOODFALL and KNEASS, Milford Lane, Strand.